

King sends cables to Assad, Qatari emir

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday sent a cable to Syrian President Hafez Assad expressing good wishes on Syria's national day and wishing the Syrian people continued progress and prosperity. In the cable, the King paid tribute to Assad's efforts enabling Syria to promote the interests of its citizens and the Arab Nation and expressed pride in bilateral relations. King Abdullah also sent a cable to the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, expressing Jordan's congratulations and support for the Gulf emirate for organising municipal elections as part of the march towards democracy. King Abdullah also paid tribute to the Qatari emir for opening the door to women's participation in the elections on an equal footing, enabling women to participate in the development of their country.

Jordan Times

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AMMAN TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 1999, DHUL QADAH 21, 1419

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Egyptian firm loses \$3 million worth of cotton in fire

CAIRO (R) — A textile firm in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria lost about \$3.2 million worth of stored cotton in a fire on Monday, police sources said. They said fire fighters managed to extinguish the blaze, which destroyed 2,700 bales of cotton in Alexandria spinning and weaving firm, Spinalex. There were no casualties, but four workers were taken to hospital after suffering from smoke inhalation. Company officials declined to comment, saying police investigations were still under way. Spinalex is a fully privatised firm that was established in 1947. It has a total 3.9 million shares listed on the bourse.

One killed in Finnish court blast

HELSINKI (AFP) — One person was killed and seven wounded when a bomb exploded Monday during a trial in a court in Helsinki, southern Finland, the Finnish press agency STT-FNB said. Police said the dead man, appearing in court in an inheritance dispute, had smuggled the bomb into the courtroom in a bag. The injured included a member of the court. Police did not give the identities of the casualties. The blast destroyed the courtroom in Helsinki, located about 50 kilometres from the Russian border on the road to Saint Petersburg.

Finnish official on trial for spying for Russia

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — A Finnish foreign ministry official, Olli Maaila, went on trial behind closed doors Monday on charges he spied for Russia. The FNB news agency reported. The suspect, who was not taken into custody, was alleged to have handed confidential European Union material to Russian diplomats stationed in Helsinki. Maaila denied all charges. "For a year and a half I was in contact with Russian diplomats in the context of my activities, and I never thought that it could have anything to do with spying," he said, denying he had transferred any confidential information.

Three arrested in Zimbabwe over arms smuggling

HARARE (AFP) — Zimbabwean authorities at the weekend arrested three United States citizens allegedly trying to smuggle an array of weaponry out of the country, police said Monday. The police officer in charge of criminal investigations, Flavio Makwara, was quoted by ZIANA news agency as saying the trio was arrested after a customs security baggage check at Harare international airport detected the weapons which included some 14 rifles and pistols.

Anti-government protests begin in Peru

LIMA (AFP) — The first in a series of anti-government demonstrations protesting the government's economic policies began Monday in Peru's Alto Huallaga Amazon region. The protest was "against the neoliberal policies and centralist character of the Peruvian government," as part of a 48-hour regional demonstration, according to the organisers. Protesters went to block roads and march in several villages, including the city of Tingo Maria in the valley of Alto Huallaga, a local police official said.

Spain's Crown Prince Felipe arrives for talks with King, senior officials

AMMAN (Petra) — Spain's Crown Prince Felipe arrived Monday on a three-day official visit during which he will meet with His Majesty King Abdullah and senior Jordanian officials.

Prince Felipe is accompanied by an official delegation including the Spanish minister of state for foreign affairs and the European Union, the secretary general of the royal court and other senior officials.

Prince Felipe was received upon arrival by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal, Prince Ali, Prince Hashem, Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, the King's adviser for national security affairs, and the director of the state security council.

He was also received by the ministers of foreign affairs, interior, information and culture as well as senior Jordanian officials.

Later Monday, Prime Minister

Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh received Prince Felipe for talks on bilateral economic cooperation.

Rawabdeh stressed Jordan's desire to strengthen bilateral relations in various fields.

Prince Felipe voiced appreciation for Jordan's stands on various world issues.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Majali, Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib, Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, Jordan's ambassador to Spain, Spain's ambassador to Jordan and the delegation accompanying Prince Felipe.

The Spanish crown prince and his delegation, accompanied by Prince Faisal, visited the tomb of the late King Hussein and laid a wreath of flowers on the tomb. Senator Taher Masi, who heads the Jordanian-Spanish Friendship Society, also met with Prince Felipe.



HRH Prince Faisal looks on as Spanish Crown Prince Felipe lays a wreath at the grave of King Hussein (AFP photo)

Iran reformers score another big win, sweep Tehran elections

TEHRAN (AFP) — Reformist supporters of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami swept all 15 seats on the Tehran municipal council Monday in another stunning defeat over the Islamic regime's conservatives.

The victory is a powerful endorsement of the president's reform agenda on the eve of his historic trip to Italy, the first to a Western European nation by an Iranian head of state since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Pro-Khatami candidates led by former Interior Minister Abdullah Nouri captured all 15 council seats in Tehran, the biggest prize in a bitterly fought campaign that marked the Islamic republic's first-ever municipal elections.

Nouri led balloting in the capital, according to final results of the Feb. 26 polls released Monday by the official news agency IRNA, after reformers scored major victories around the nation where votes had already been counted.

Women captured three of the Tehran seats, led by journalist Jamileh Kadivar, whose husband is culture minister and whose brother was arrested last month in a case that has outraged students, intellectuals and other backers of reform.

Reform candidates even won two of the six alternate seats, with the closest conservative finishing more than 25,000 votes behind the lowest vote-getter among the 15 reformers elected.

Two of the 15 also had the backing of conservatives but Monday's results confirm a staggering victory for reformers nationwide, who won 124 seats on the municipal councils in Iran's 28 provincial capitals.

Conservatives earned just 44 seats with another 88 going to independent candidates, according to tallies in the Iranian press.

Some 300 women won election to municipal councils nationwide, according to the Interior Ministry, including the elder sister of President Khatami, elected in Ardakan in central Iran.

Some 4,000 women were among the 300,000 candidates contesting the elections. A total of 64.41 per cent of Iran's eligible voters — nearly 25 million out of 40 million — took part in the balloting according to official figures.

Only 40 per cent of the eligible voters in the capital cast their ballots while the overall

turnout figure of 64 per cent was lower than the 80 per cent recorded in the May 1997 presidential election which swept Khatami to power.

The decisive victory raises expectations that reformers will take control of the conservative-dominated parliament in next spring's parliamentary elections.

It will also put Khatami supporters in mayor's offices nationwide and one of the first tasks facing the new Tehran council will be finding a successor to Gholamhossein Karbaschi, the former Tehran mayor jailed on corruption charges last year.

Karbaschi, who is close to Khatami, was sentenced to two years in prison and is barred from holding public office while his case is under appeal.

The popular mayor has repeatedly claimed he was set up by opponents and the sweeping victory by reformers indicates popular displeasure with the conservatives' continuing control over Iran's police and judiciary.

The resounding endorsement of Khatami's reform agenda could not come at a better time for the president, who begins a high-profile trip to Italy on Tuesday.

Palestinian rights commission slams 'autocracy'

RAMALLAH (R) — A Palestinian human rights commission, in an annual report on Monday, lashed out at what it termed autocratic rule in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and demanded a constitution.

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, a group chartered by the self-rule administration, also said continued Israeli military occupation of parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip caused widespread abuse of Palestinian rights.

Focusing on the PNA, led by President Yasser Arafat, Haidar Abdul Shafi, the rights group's commissioner general, said: "All problems are an outcome of the

absence of separation of powers and a basic law.

"And the authority is centred in one man," he told a news conference on publication of the commission's 1998 report. "The situation of citizens' rights won't be solved unless these matters are straightened up."

The report said Arafat's cabinet was weak and accused the executive branch of mismanaging public money.

Turning to the role of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the report noted that the parliament had approved more than five laws, including the Basic Law, still awaiting ratification by Arafat.

Arafat, saying the primary national concern was the

peace process with Israel, has told the legislature he would not approve a constitution at this time.

"The council suffers from the absence of a constitutional framework to organise its authority, thus its powers have been inadequate and mortgaged by the executive branch," the report said.

The report criticised the PNA's creation of state security courts, which have held lightning trials that international human rights groups say fail to uphold the rights of defendants.

"The executive branch practices have reinforced these defaults and problems," the report said, adding that "non-judicial officials" sometimes inter-

fered in legal disputes.

Last year, four Palestinian security men who killed two other security agents were executed after a military court trial that lasted only several hours, the report said.

A Palestinian colonel, convicted of rape and inciting the public against the authority by committing the crime, was killed by a firing squad last month in Gaza after proceedings lasting several hours.

"If citizens had confidence in the legal system they wouldn't take to the streets to demand the execution of security men. They felt the authority would protect its officials," said commission board member Hanan Ashrawi.

Fights erupt between settlers, Palestinians

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — Fistfights broke out in the south of the West Bank on Monday as Palestinian villagers clashed with Jewish settlers over a trench being dug on Arab land, witnesses said.

The clashes broke out when bulldozers hired by residents of the Efrat settlement started digging a ditch for water pipes on land near the Palestinian village of

Jurat Al Shamaa south of Bethlehem, according to Ibrahim Fawaghira, the local mayor.

Israeli troops quickly separated the two sides and detained one Palestinian landowner, Fawaghira said.

There were no reports of any serious injuries.

In early February Jewish settlers set up caravans on a hill in the Wadi Rahal region near Jurat Al

Shamaa.

Israeli settlers have intensified their campaign of settlement expansion since the signing of the U.S.-brokered Wye River accord in October and ahead of Israeli general elections in May.

Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon urged settlers to "run and grab as many hilltops as you can."

Defense Minister Moshe Arens has also encouraged

settlement expansion ahead of the May polls out of concern that a possible defeat of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party would be followed by a freeze on settlement activity by a more dovish government.

Some 160,000 Jewish settlers live in 144 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which Israel occupied in June 1967.

Women around the world examine role and place on international day

PARIS (AFP) — Around the world on Monday, women received flowers, met with politicians, went to the polls, clashed with policemen and women, were oppressed and slammed oppression, on International Women's Day.

In France, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin lunched with his nine female ministers, while France's secretary for women's rights, Nicole Pery, gave her colleagues roses.

Environment Minister Dominique Voynet received a show of support after she was insulted by French farmers Thursday at the national agricultural show fair and had her office trashed by others last month.

Voynet's Greens party also handed out "housewives' kits" containing aprons and a wooden spoon to members of the male-dominated parliament.

Jospin was giving a reception for several hundred prominent women, including Oscar-winning actress Juliette Binoche and Nobel laureate and anti-landmine activist Jody Williams.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan called for

an end to violence against women, saying it "is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation," during a ceremony in New York.

In Geneva, the U.N.'s high commissioner for refugees, Sadako Ogata, echoed Annan's words, and urged governments to grant asylum to women fleeing violence.

"The nature of persecution women suffer from is not the same as for men," she said.

In Jerusalem, a dispute erupted after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu briefly addressed female politicians to mark International Women's Day before leaving to attend election campaign functions.

Netanyahu told some 100 politicians and feminists he hoped "one day it will not be necessary to celebrate Women's Day because we will have achieved equality of the sexes."

His appearance was slammed by opposition Labour Party deputy Yael Dayan, who charged he had not held a serious discussion with the assembled women.

Turkish police detained 16 people in Istanbul for holding

"illegal" celebration meetings, including a group which tried to stage a play in a train station.

In Qatar, women celebrated the right to vote, going to the polls for the first time in the Gulf to choose a local council from among 227 candidates, including six women.

The landmark event took place in a country where few women drive or uncover their face in public.

"We live in a society which is misogynistic to the bone," said woman candidate Muza Malki, as veiled women in black voted at separate polling stations from men.

Moroccan Premier Abdelrahmane Youssoufi announced an "action plan" to protect women there from violence and raise their literacy levels beyond the current 68 per cent.

In Rwanda, where women represent about 60 per cent of the population, the day was proclaimed a national holiday and marked by celebrations.

President Pasteur Bizimungu declared that women should be freed from a "submissive culture" which has oppressed all Rwandans since colonial days.

Eritrean women were celebrated for their courage in clashes with neighbouring Ethiopia, as women make up 25 per cent of the combat troops, according to a high-ranking officer.

"We are on the front line to defend our independence," feminist leader Luul Gebreab told AFP.

In Afghanistan, the day went unmarked as the Taliban militia ignored a call by U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton for restoration of women's rights in the country.

Several Pakistani women supporters of former Premier Benazir Bhutto were hurt in a scuffle with police during a rally in Karachi.

"Women were wrestling with policemen and women constables," a witness said.

Women in Asia continue to face discrimination and inequality in politics, education and the workplace, activists said as the day was marked across the region with calls for equal opportunities.

In Manila, a women's group demanded a public apology from President Joseph Estrada for remarks deemed derogatory to women.



An elderly woman sells flowers Monday in a street market in Moscow. Monday was International Women's Day, a national holiday in Russia (AP photo)

refusal to acknowledge a teenage beauty queen who says she is his daughter.

The Australian government was accused of doing little or nothing to advance the cause of equality, in an attack by

leading feminists.

Maira Rayner, Jocelyn Scutt and Eva Cox said the government's record was unsatisfactory, that it favoured women who chose to stay at home, and focused only on "safe" issues.

Iraq says one wounded in U.S. air attacks

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said on Monday that one person was wounded when Western warplanes attacked civilian and military targets in the south and north of the country.

An Iraqi military spokesman said Iraqi air defences had confronted the attacking aircraft and forced them to flee.

"The hostile warplanes fired their missiles at some of our serviceable establishments and some of our weapons sites and the hostile bombing led to

injuring a citizen," the military spokesman said.

A U.S. defence department spokesman said its fighter jets dropped laser-guided bombs on anti-aircraft artillery sites in the northern no-fly zone.

Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Steve Campbell said the U.S. bombing was in response to a threat by Iraqi radars. He added U.S. forces did not suffer any injuries and there was no damage to their planes.

"Twenty-two hostile formations violated our national air-

space flying 61 sorties against a number of service establishments," the Iraqi military spokesman said.

He said that at 0650 GMT, 11 formations of Western aircraft entered Iraqi airspace, flying in from Turkey.

"They were F-14s, F-15s, F-16s, supported by early warning AWACS from inside Turkish airspace," the spokesman said.

"Those black crows carried out 23 sorties, flying over regions in Nineveh, Erbil and

Dohuk provinces.

"At 11:15, 11 hostile formations violated our national airspace coming from Kuwait and Saudi airspace, flying 20 sorties from Kuwait and 18 from Saudi."

The spokesman said they flew over regions in Dhi Qar, Wasit, Meisan and Muthanna provinces.

U.S. and British jets based either in neighbouring Gulf countries or at sea have conducted dozens of raids on military targets in the Iraqi exclu-

sion zones since Baghdad announced in December it would begin actively resisting the patrols.

Iraq does not recognise the no-fly zones that were set up after the 1991 Gulf war to protect Kurds in the north and Shi'ite Muslims in the south.

The northern zone covers much of a Kurdish-held enclave that broke away from Baghdad after the Gulf War and also a swathe of government-controlled territory around the city of Mosul.



Palestinian pilgrims, on their way to Mecca, board a Palestinian airplane at the Gaza International Airport in Rafah Monday (AP photo)

Palestinian pilgrims can now fly from Gaza Strip to Mecca

RAFAH (AP) — For many Palestinian pilgrims, the only way to Mecca used to be a days-long bus ride through the desert.

On Monday, hundreds of faithful from the Gaza Strip boarded Palestinian air planes for a short flight to the Saudi Arabian city.

"Today is an historic day for Palestine and for all the Palestinian people because for the first time Palestinians can fly directly via Gaza International Airport

to Saudi Arabia," said Fawaz Zeidan, the head of the Civil Aviation Authority.

The airport at the southern end of the Gaza Strip opened last fall as part of the Wye River peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The airfield is the Palestinians' first gateway to the world and is seen as a symbol of fledgling independence.

Starting Monday, 3,650 pilgrims from Gaza were to

fly to Saudi Arabia over five days on several special daily flights.

"This is a great day for me," said Ibrahim Hussein, 39, as he waited to board a Boeing 727. "I will remember it forever because our departure from Gaza International Airport is another sign of the coming state."

West Bank residents, for the time being, will still have to travel to Amman, and there catch a plane or a bus to Saudi Arabia.

Suspected Israeli spy deported from Jordan, newspaper reports

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — An Israeli tour guide was deported from Jordan last week on suspicion of spying, a Jordanian weekly newspaper said Monday.

Al Majd newspaper, which was quoting the Israeli daily Yediot Ahranot, said that Jil Brenner, 45, was deported following his entry to Jordan last Tuesday from the northern Sheikh Hussein border point.

It added that Jordanian intelligence agents at Hussein Bridge detained him for two hours for interrogation before releasing him and ordering his immediate deportation.

Al Majd said the Israeli citizen has visited the Kingdom

26 times as a tour guide, accompanying Israeli tourists.

Spokesman of the Israeli embassy in Amman, Roey Gilad, said the mission was not aware of Brenner's case and no information was available on his reported deportation.

"Nobody in the embassy is aware of such an incident. If Brenner has any complaint, he should contact the Jordanian mission in Tel Aviv," Gilad told the Jordan Times.

Jordanian officials were not immediately available for comment Monday.

Brenner told the Israeli daily that Jordanian officials had asked him about his frequent visits to the Kingdom.

"I felt that they wanted to

link my visits to the case of Misha'al."

He was referring to the foiled assassination attempt against Hamas' politburo chief Khaled Misha'al in Sept. 1997, by agents of the Israeli secret service, Mossad, who were arrested and later exchanged for Palestinian and Jordanian prisoners in Israeli jails.

The Israeli agents, who held forged Canadian passports, were captured by Misha'al's bodyguard.

Israeli tourist groups are usually accompanied by Israeli guides and frequently are accompanied by unarmed security officers in civilian dress.

Sharon urges Europeans not to recognise Palestinian state

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon has urged his European counterparts not to recognise a unilaterally declared Palestinian state, according to a letter released Monday.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is seeking assurances that the European Union (EU) and the United States will eventually recognise a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Such assurances would

come as compensation for a possible decision by Arafat not to declare statehood on May 4, at the end of the five-year period of autonomy, as initially planned.

Arafat has been holding talks with world leaders on the subject, and is to meet with U.S. President Bill Clinton on March 23.

The United States, Europe and several Arab leaders have urged Arafat to hold off on a declaration of statehood in May, fearing it could lead

to the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Israel has said it would annex parts of the West Bank and Gaza in response to a unilateral declaration of statehood.

Sharon told the EU foreign ministers in a letter dated Feb. 21 that a unilateral declaration of statehood would violate the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements, according to an Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Egyptian court sends 14 militants to jail with hard labour

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian state security court on Monday sentenced 14 Islamist militants to up to 15 years in jail with hard labour for arson attacks on video shops.

Before Judge Samir Abul Ma'ad pronounced the verdicts, the defendants, all but one of them in their 20s, announced support for a ceasefire call by the leaders of the armed struggle to install a purist Islamic state in Egypt.

Abul Ma'ad acquitted nine defendants, including two juveniles, and sentenced a third to three years in prison.

All the accused had pleaded

not guilty to all charges.

The judge dropped the charge of belonging to an illegal group, a reference to Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah (Islamic group), one of Egypt's main militant groups.

"The defendants are satisfied with the verdicts," lawyer Mahmoud Abdul Shafi told Reuters after the court session, apparently relieved they had not been more severe.

"But we will appeal to the military ruler not to approve the sentences," he added. "All the defendants made false confessions under torture during interrogation."

Verdicts issued by state security or military courts cannot be appealed against, and only Prime Minister Kamal Ganzouri, in his capacity as the military ruler under the emergency laws, can quash them or refer them back to court.

Lawyers said they would challenge a three-year sentence handed to Walid Megahed Zayed, a juvenile at the time of the crime for which he was convicted, in the supreme court of cassation.

Handcuffed and wearing white prison uniforms, the defendants shouted "Allahu Akbar" and "we devote our

lives to Islam." Some were carrying copies of the Holy Koran.

Mohammad Ramadan Gharib, a middle-aged butcher, urged officials to protect the human rights of prisoners. "Where are the prisoners' rights?" he asked, speaking with difficulty.

Lawyer Hamdi Marasi said Gharib had been paralysed after being given electric shocks on the genitals. "I have medical reports proving this," Marasi said.

The men were on trial for arson attacks on video shops and distribution of militant

leaflets in Cairo in 1995.

Khaled Abdul Mo'iti, sentenced to 10 years with hard labour, read out a statement proclaiming continued support for a ceasefire call issued by jailed Gamaa leaders in 1997.

"The sons of Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah in Tora prison announce their support for the group's leaders... and call upon military units inside and outside the country to continue the ceasefire," said the statement.

About 1,200 people, mostly militants and police, have been killed since militant groups took up arms to topple President Hosni Mubarak's govern-

ment in 1992. Sixty-eight militants have been executed since Mubarak set up military courts in 1992.

Since the July 1997 ceasefire call, militants have mounted few attacks in Egypt, with the bloody exception of the Luxor massacre of 58 foreigners and four Egyptians in November 1997. Abdul Mo'iti said Egypt could have avoided confrontation with militants if it had allowed them to propagate their ideology.

"If there had been freedom to preach Islam, the Gamaa would not have resorted to violence," he told reporters.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

19:10News headlines
19:35Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30On the Banks of Jordan
22:00News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:33Fajr
05:50(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:46Dhuhr
15:07Asr
17:42Maghrib
18:59Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.

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St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to dip gradually and clouds building up at different altitudes. Scattered

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

showers are expected in the afternoon with winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman11/20
Aqaba15/28
Deserts09/22
Jordan Valley15/27

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 25, Aqaba 32. Humidity readings: Amman 18 per cent, Aqaba 16 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun08/18
Jerash08/24
Um Qays10/24
Madaba07/22
Petra06/21
Dead Sea14/28

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
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Dr. Yusuf Faghi4390104
Dr. Ghazi Abu Shikha4752405
Dr. Mulhass Halaseh55192200

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Ruia Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

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EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police. 192. 4621111. 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Police Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints

4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)5921132
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport44-53200

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdi56661317
Husseini Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4642816
Akish Maternity46424412
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Musharraf Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajirin 4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marika4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100

HOSPITALS

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Telephone Information (directory assistance)5921132
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
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Army, Marika4891611/15
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Jordan Television4773111
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Water Authority5680100
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RJ Flight Information44-53200
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DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:00Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
08:25Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:05Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:00Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:10Paris (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
19:35Beirut (RJ)
20:30Jeddah (RJ)
20:45Damascus (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights

07:10Frankfurt (LH)
15:35Istanbul (TK)
19:00Dubai (EK)
20:00Beirut (ME)
20:50Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)
00:35Amsterdam (KL)
01:55Bucharest (RO)
03:00Rome (AZ)
07:25London, Damascus (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:25 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

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Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday received His Royal Highness Crown Prince Felipe, the prince of Asturias, at Bab Al Salam Palace. Prince Felipe expressed his deep condolences and sorrow over the loss of His Majesty the late King Hussein. Also attending the meeting were Her Royal Highness Princess Rania Abdullah and other members of the Royal family (Photo by Yusef 'Allan)

Jordanian-Emirates interests team up in new investment company

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have announced the establishment of a joint investment company involving business communities from the two countries.

The announcement was made by Sheikh Sultan Ben Khalifah Ben Zayed Al Nahayem, head of the office of Abu Dhabi's crown prince, who said practical steps were taken to bring the company into being.

The announcement was made at a meeting in Amman organised by the UAE embassy, attended by HRH Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, representatives of the Jordan Association of Banks, several commercial banks, economic organisations and the ministers of finance and industry and

trade and the governor of the Central bank of Jordan.

UAE ambassador to Jordan who attended the signing of the agreement on the creation of the company said his country wants to promote ties with Jordan. He noted that the two sides are now involved in discussions on economic cooperation in various fields that will encourage continued economic growth in Jordan.

He said the two sides will meet in the coming few weeks to announce the new entity's capital, the venue of its headquarters and the fields in which it will operate and invest.

The President of the Jordan Association of Banks Zuhair Khouri expressed Jordan's appreciation of the UAE's President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan, his government and

people for their support of Jordan's economy.

He said the Kingdom has an attractive investment climate, noting that the new government has already announced its determination to encourage investment.

Finance Minister Michel Manto said numerous investment opportunities exist and stressed that the new company will enjoy the full support of the Jordanian government.

The minister said the new company would invest in projects as varied as housing projects, the industrial harbour at Aqaba and phosphate- and potash-based chemical fertilisers.

Economic sources in Amman said the new company will invest at least \$100 million in development projects.

Karak police investigate human skeletons found in cave

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police in the Karak governorate have discovered a cave carved in the rocks containing a large number of human skeletons, including skulls and limbs of children, women and men.

Police sources said almost half of the skeletons were found inside sacks and nylon bags. The rest were piled one on top of another.

The site, located in an area called Dubbeh, located between Karak and Qamranah was visited

by the public prosecutor, the Karak police chief, and officers from the criminal laboratory who found the cave's entrance had been covered with mud and cement, according to police sources. The cave is located in an outlying area, roughly 20 kilometres away from any populated area.

A citizen alerted the police after finding an opening at the top of the cave through which he saw the skeletons.

Sources said the investigators

did not find any sharp tools or remnants of blood or garments inside the cave, and have taken samples of the skeletons and limbs to the National Centre of Forensic Medicine's criminal laboratory for examination to estimate how long the skeletons were in the cave.

Police hope the laboratory tests will help determine the time of death and the age of the people. They said initial estimates put the time of death in the late 1970s.

Anti-corruption draft to face bicameral audience, but deputies warn amendments will nullify its purpose

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Parliamentarians have agreed to break a procedural impasse that caused an anti-corruption draft law to sit on the senate's shelves for seven years, but opposition politicians warn amendments that could nullify the law's utility.

"[Deputies and Senators] have agreed to exclude themselves from the list of categories required [by the draft] to provide an assessment of their properties upon taking office," said yesterday Salem Nahhas, secretary general of the leftist Hashd party.

"How closer can you get to a confession of corruption?" liberal Toujan Feisal said in a recent interview with the Jordan Times.

The draft, officially titled "Law Against Illicit Profits," aimed to fill a legal vacuum deriving from the absence of a ministerial code of conduct.

It was submitted to Parliament by the government in 1990 following a request from the Lower House.

It was volleyed back and forth from the Lower to the

Upper House, which rejected it twice, for two years. Senators objected to seven articles of the draft, including one stipulating that they, in addition to ministers and deputies, also submit a personal financial assessment upon appointment.

The draft also aimed to provide a tool to evaluate deputies' and officials' illicit gains during their tenures, by comparing the assets declared at the beginning of their mandate with the declarations rendered upon leaving office.

Last month, 44 deputies petitioned the Lower House speaker to pressure the 40-member, appointed Senate to resume legislative procedures for the anti-corruption draft.

Leftist Deputy Nazih Ammarin (Karak), who was one of the signatories of last month's petition to revive the draft, stressed that regulations to ensure transparency are crucial to the development of a real democracy.

"Nobody can talk of democracy when officials are not bound to a code of conduct," Ammarin noted.

In most Western countries,

separate codes of conduct require parliamentarians and ministers to declare their assets — including property, business interests, stocks, bonds and securities — and provide relevant legal documents upon their swearing in to office. Independent commissions reassess the value of officials' properties when they leave office.

"The Constitution stipulates that when the two Houses disagree twice on a draft, it should be discussed in a joint session," Senator Kamal Sha'er, rapporteur of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee and member of the Legal Affairs Committee, told the Jordan Times yesterday.

The joint session will then have to approve the draft by a qualified majority of two thirds.

Senate President Zeid Rifa'i and Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali met on Sunday with the members of both Upper and Lower House's Legal Affairs Committees in an effort to agree on the draft ahead of a possible joint session.

"Before a joint session is convened, there should be a genuine effort to find a common ground to reach an agreement," Sha'er said.

"[Sunday's] meeting came as part of such an effort and was successful in reaching an understanding, which, however, is not binding on either House."

Rifa'i and Majali will now brief their colleagues informally in each House, but it appears unlikely that a joint session to discuss the anti-corruption draft will be convened before the end of the current ordinary session of Parliament, due to close on March 27.

"I believe it is too optimistic to assume that a joint session can be convened by the end of the month," Sha'er said, pointing out that the Houses will also be required to hold a confidence vote on the newly-appointed government of Prime Minister Abdul-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh before they adjourn.

An extraordinary session might be convened during the summer, but the Constitution puts the matter completely in

the hands of His Majesty King Abdullah, who will also fix the extraordinary session's agenda by Royal Decree.

"The Constitution does not fix deadlines for drafts that have to be referred to a joint session. It is at full discretion of the Senate president to decide when it is the right time to submit the draft," said Sha'er.

"My guess is that a joint session will have to wait until the next ordinary session [in fall]," he added.

At Sunday's meeting, Rifa'i and Majali also discussed with their legal committees two other drafts that, like the anti-corruption law, are awaiting a joint session for final approval or rejection.

They include legislation on court fees and a "Youth Law," in which the Senate wanted to scrap an article on segregation of the sexes in school swimming pools.

"The Upper House's view is that the whole article be eliminated because it is unnecessary," Sha'er said.

"My impression at Sunday's meeting was that the Lower House will agree."

What's Going On

FILM

• "The Fan" at Books@Café, Jahl Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).

LECTURES

• "Beethoven Symphonie Nr. 2 D-Dur" by voo Helmut Burkard (In English) at the National Music Conservatory on Wednesday March 10 at 6:00 p.m.

• "Effective Conservation with Site Planning" by Dr. Lytton J. Musselman at Fulbright House in Shmeisani (4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.) (Tel. 568-4760).

SPECIAL PROGRAMMING

• JTV Channel Two special interview series, hosted by Rami Khouri, examining the lessons learned from the life and reign of King Hussein, Jordan's political, economic and social situation and how the legacy of King Hussein is relevant to the country's national challenges at the beginning of the reign of His Majesty King Abdullah. The interviews will be broadcast every Monday and Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. on Channel 2. All interviews are in English with Arabic subtitles.

Minor in custody for stabbing death of sister

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — A 17-year-old minor is in police custody after allegedly shooting and critically injuring his pregnant sister in the Wihdat area late Sunday night, according to official sources.

The victim Amal A., 19, reportedly received gunshot wounds to her chest, neck and upper limbs, by her brother in a Wihdat neighbourhood. Her brother turned himself in to police, claiming that he killed her to cleanse his honour, the source said.

The source added that the victim, who is single, underwent medical examinations on March 3, that indicated that she had been pregnant for 16 weeks out of wedlock.

The official would not reveal further details, but added that the woman is being treated at Al Bashir Hospital's intensive care unit and listed in critical condition.

Meanwhile, a 28-year-old husband, who on Sunday claimed that he killed his wife, Izzidhar M., for reasons of honour, told investigators

on Monday that family problems were behind the killing, according to an official source.

Initial reports had indicated that Sufian M. allegedly stabbed his wife several times and slit her throat because he "suspected that she was behaving immorally."

But on Monday, investigators said the unemployed husband claimed he killed his wife because of family problems regarding the selling of the victim's gold.

"Until now we do not have a clear motive why the man might have killed his wife," Criminal Prosecutor Bassem Momani told the Jordan Times.

The victim had complained to authorities two weeks prior to the murder that her husband had physically assaulted her.

Based on the medical examination following the complaint, the authorities detained the husband for several days.

A close friend of the victim informed the Jordan Times Monday that the victim had often complained

that she was continuously abused by her husband.

The source added that after Sufian was released from police custody, he kept appealing to his wife and her family to be reunited.

"We advised her not to return to him, but because she feared being divorced she decided to return to him," said the friend, who preferred anonymity.

"I just cannot believe that she is dead. She was such a calm and kind-hearted person and was very religious," the friend said.

Momani said he had pressed premeditated murder charges against the suspect.

In other news, police said Monday they caught the murderer of a 67-year-old man who was killed in Marka on Feb. 2. The killer admitted he murdered the man with an intent to steal.

After drinking tea with the victim, the killer struck him on his head with a hard object, then searched the victim's house for something to steal, but he found nothing but cigarettes.

Animal protection society faces financial straits

Lack of funds has prevented the society from running a major nationwide campaign to raise popular awareness of proper animal care

By Dana Charkasi

WADI SEER — The Jordan Society for the Protection of Animals (JSPA) is trying to generate funds to help treat sick animals and to raise public awareness over animal care and handling and the prevention of cruelty to animals.

The London-based Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad (SPAN) annually sends its Jordanian affiliate in Amman approximately JD100,000 to help cover key running costs.

But some staff are worried that the country's only centre to help abused animals might be forced to close if it cannot achieve self-reliance and if the government does not help it meet some of its costs.

"One day SPANA might stop its payments to its Jordanian branch," said Raghad Kamal, director of the Jordan operation. "After ten years of operating here, we should have been able to arrange [our financial situation]."

"We need approximately JD115,000 per year only to run our two main centres," he told the Jordan Times. "The Jordanian government does not contribute a single penny because it thinks that this project is some kind of a luxury." "Voluntary donations by people grateful for our healing of their animals are well meant but do not take us very



OUNCE OF PREVENTION: Two boys retrieve their puppy from JSPA after his vaccination (photo courtesy Chris Larter)

far."

Lack of funds has prevented the society from running a major nationwide campaign to raise popular awareness of the need to look after animals and prevent their abuse — a practice that remains common in Jordan because of social misconceptions.

Instead, the JSPA is investing in future generations, going to schools to lecture young students on how to look after animals.

Several embassies have made some donations to help its operations.

"The Canadian embassy has provided us with video

sets, televisions and computers worth JD20,000 while the British embassy has donated an operation bed," said Chris Larter, the society's supervising inspector.

"The army has given us blankets which are very useful for us and some people even send us donations in-kind from England," she added.

Jordanian and British families have joined a four-year-old scheme under which they adopt an abandoned animal and send annual fees for its upkeep.

"The adoption scheme is quite popular and fetched around JD160,000 in its first three years," added Larter, who also coordinates the adoption scheme in Jordan.

JSPA's adopted horses, mules or donkeys not only help out farmers when one of their working animals is sick but also work in the newly-established Therapeutic Riding Society where physically-handicapped children improve their physical abilities under the instruction of therapeutic riding teachers.

JSPA began to offer its services under the name SPANA in association with the Ministry of Agriculture in 1988. Two years later, it was officially registered with the Ministry of Interior. HRH Princess Zein Bint Al Hussein is the society's chairperson.

"The abuse of animals is quite common in Jordan," said Margaret Ledger, JSPA's vice chairperson.

However, the issue of animal abuse in the Kingdom remains a complex one stemming partly from lack of knowledge and experience, negligence, and ill-founded fears of possible transfer of illnesses from animals to people, said Ledger.

In addition, several animals, including dogs, are religiously perceived as impure, or najis.

Also, the idea of maintaining a "pet" is not an established one in Jordan and remains mostly restricted to the upper-middle and upper classes, animal activists say.

"Pet ownership stems from the domestication of animals and their use for working purposes," said one man. "It is a product of the Western welfare state and the breakdown of the traditional family structure and its byproduct of loneliness. Such feelings are rarely experienced by people living in a traditional family structure."

In the minds of most people, animals exist for their "ability to carry out a designated job in the cheapest possible way," including the transportation of goods and people, ploughing land and guarding, homes, land and livestock.

Cats, for example, are meant to minimise the threat of mice and rats.

Lack of Jordanian legislation preventing animal abuse — including animals' right to food, proper treatment and medical help in case of sickness — has prevented effective means to safeguard animals from cruel practices, Ledger said.

But a glimmer of hope looms.

"A draft law on preventing cruelty against animals is ready now and hopefully it will be implemented soon," said Ledger.

The draft law will be presented to the government, which in turn will send it to Parliament for endorsement. The process could take months or years.

JSPA mainly provides medical services for free to "working animals" — such as horses carrying tourists to the southern Nabatean city of Petra or mules ploughing the fields — of poor Jordanians.

It has two permanent clinics in Wadi Seer and in the Jordan Valley, the country's food basket in addition to its six mobile clinics that visit farms and other dwellings far from the main clinics.

Kamal said many cases of abuse are triggered by negligence, rather than deliberate cruelty.

"We have many cases of

kidney failures, especially during ploughing time. The animals sweat a lot when ploughing, but the farmers don't give them water to drink and don't grant them a break," he said.

"The animal's kidneys often fail and the animal collapses," said Kamal.

"Such accidents could have been easily prevented if the animal was given water and a short break."

Most other cases are curable if farmers seek help on time rather than wait until the animal's condition reaches a critical state.

Kamal said many animal-owners often resort to traditional healing methods which often leave animals in worse condition.

One of the most common such practices is "kawi" — the use of burning to heal any disease or injury.

In one instance, the owner of a donkey completely burnt the animal when he applied the kawi method.

Larter spoke of another case in which the nose of a donkey was lacerated by the a sharp metal harness, but his owner totally ignored it.

Animal activists say children often throw stones at animals when they first see them.

"It's like an instinct reaction and we have to try to change children's feelings of animosity towards animals," said

Larter.

"We have to show the population the right direction and we should concentrate on children as older generations do not often respond to our efforts," explained Larter, who got involved in animal welfare at the age of 14.

JSPA runs an educational programme to teach farmers how to handle animals. And in cooperation with the education ministry, JSPA's teachers visit schools to teach students how to care for their animals.

"It is also important for us to reach mothers, as many kids show affection towards animals and would like to keep them at home. Mothers often refuse because they are afraid that some diseases might be spread," Kamal said.

"It would be easy to avoid that possibility by administering a routine vaccination to the pet, by simply keeping it clean and by thoroughly washing the vegetables that come from a garden in which cats not belonging to the family stray," he said.

Children should also learn that keeping an animal requires responsibility.

"A dog for example needs regular proper food — not bones — and they need affection and daily exercise."

Pro-reform group 'firm winner' in Estonia

TALLINN (AFP) — A pro-reform opposition grouping of three parties emerged as the firm winner in Estonia's general elections, according to official results released Monday.

However, tough negotiations are expected in the coming days as the other opposition forces, aiming at a slower pace of reform and greater attention to public welfare, have refused to concede defeat.

With 99 per cent of the vote counted, the three parties in the pro-reform camp gained a combined 53 seats in the 101-member national parliament. The Pro Patria Union and the Reform Party each picked up 18 seats, while the Moderates were credited with 17.

The Centrist Party came out with the biggest number of seats for a single party with 28 seats. But its closest ally, the Rural People's Party, performed poorly, picking up only seven seats.

Under the Estonian constitution, the president has two weeks to pick a candidate for the post of prime minister, who does not need to be from the biggest party.

The prime minister-designate then has another two weeks to form the government, which will be submitted to parliament for a vote. The three pro-reform parties issued a statement early Monday, announcing they were ready to form a majority coalition.

"We declare we are prepared to take on the responsibility to form the next government," they said.

Mart Laar, leader of Pro Patria, told a news conference earlier that the trio was the "clear winner" in the election. Centrist Party leader Edgar Savisaar, who personally captured the biggest number of votes in the whole country, dismissed the announcement as a "nervous over-reaction" that attempted to anticipate events.

"There is nothing to speculate about here," a confident former premier told Estonian Television.

There were 12 parties competing in the election, and the Centrist Party emerged as the winner. Under every European tradition, the president should propose to form the next government.

Relations between

President Lennart Meri and Savisaar are frosty. Meri issued a string of veiled warnings against Savisaar on the eve of Sunday's election, implying the Centrist Party leader was a demagogue who could harm Estonia's reform process.

The Coalition Party, forming the backbone of the present government, barely scraped over the five per cent threshold, gaining seven seats.

The pro-reform trio has said it will reach out to the Coalition Party to bolster their majority from 53 to a safe 60 in the 101-member parliament.

Early commitment to reform since the restoration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 has earned Estonia a place in the fast-track group of six East and Central European countries invited to accession talks with the European Union.

The last party to cross the threshold to parliament was the leftist United People's Party, comprising a Russian party and a marginal Social-Democratic grouping. Another Russian party, more nationalist in tone, failed to get representation.

In comparison with the previous election, the number of Estonian citizens of Russian ethnic origin has more than doubled, to over 100,000, as more Russians are being naturalised.

"In the longer term, there is no future for ethnically based parties that act as single-issue pressure groups," Reform Party leader Siim Kallas told a news conference. "The Russian parties that we had in the previous parliament did not have a proper identity as parties."

In view of the large chunk of votes going to the Centrist Party and other left-wing groups, the next government will have to take care of the needs of those hit hardest by the country's radical economic reforms.

According to a pre-election poll, over two-thirds of Estonians said they expected the next government to take more care of public welfare by increasing pensions and child benefits, and improve health care.

The turnout was 55.8 per cent, down from the nearly 70 per cent four years ago, election officials said.



Indonesian women protest outside the office of the United Nations in Jakarta during a demonstration against violence against women and other human rights violations. More than 50 women demonstrators protested in conjunction with International Women's Day and were peacefully arrested (AFP photo)

More than 200 arrested in mass Women's Day protests in Jakarta

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesian police arrested more than 200 protesters in separate demonstrations marking International Women's Day Monday, witnesses said.

In the first sweep police-men and policewomen rounded up 59 women protesting against violence against women and other human rights abuses outside the local office of the United Nations, witnesses said.

There was no violence as the police bundled them into buses. They were driven off singing protest songs.

Police said they had not applied for a permit to demonstrate.

Earlier the women, most

of them students, and a few men had tied purple ribbons onto the arms of the riot police stationed in front of the U.N. building on Jakarta's Thamrin boulevard.

In the second protest the military hauled in some 150 students and other protesters at the back entrance of the defence ministry.

"Stop the violence against women — investigate all the cases of violence against women in Aceh, Ambon and East Timor," the group said in a statement, referring to troubled areas where many rapes are blamed on the military.

The protesters, who also object to the military's role in politics, were peacefully rounded up by some 300

troops and loaded onto four military trucks.

"Revolution, revolution till we die," the group of men and women chanted as they stepped into the trucks.

Earlier Monday a separate group of some 100 women migrant workers staged a noisy protest in front of the Ministry for Women's Affairs demanding better protection for housemaids and domestics working in foreign countries.

Banging pans and other kitchen utensils, they waved placards reading "We need protection, we're not slaves!" and "Unite migrant workers."

The protest was organised by the domestic servant section of the Union of

Indonesian Migrant Workers.

The group said in a statement that domestics working overseas were the group most susceptible to exploitation and violence.

The situation is aggravated by the government's "ignorance" of their problems, with officials often dismissing them with degrading comments, the group said.

Indonesians working in foreign countries, thousands of them in the Middle East, are mainly manual workers or domestics. The protest coincided with an international seminar on businesswomen and entrepreneurship, which was opened by President B.J. Habibie.

Controversial writer detained in China

BEIJING (AP) — An author of controversial books banned by the Communist Party has been detained in China's restive Muslim northwest, where he was researching his latest project, family and friends said Monday.

Police notified Wang Lixiong's relatives in Beijing last Tuesday that he was being held at an undisclosed location in Xinjiang on suspicion of leaking state secrets, said Hao Weizhen, his adoptive aunt.

The next day police searched his apartment in western Beijing, scoured his computer files and took away handwritten manuscripts and copies of some of his books, she said.

While she claimed to know nothing more about Wang's plight or his latest research, a fellow author believed one source gave Wang local government documents and he may have been trying to interview separatist groups in Xinjiang, China's historic central Asian buffer land.

Armed rebellion against Chinese rule by Turkic-speaking Muslims has flared anew in recent years. Despite a three-year crackdown against separatists and the Islamic study groups believed to support them, the conflict has become the government's most violent internal threat, one it does not want publicised.

Wang has waded into sensitive controversies before. His 1991 political novel "Yellow Peril" published under a pseudonym Bao Mi, or "Keep Secret," predicted civil war in China and a nuclear conflict which ended with hordes of Chinese fleeing into neighbouring countries.

Authorities banned the book, presumably because it foretold the end of Communist Party rule. The novel also carried echoes of the party-ordered quelling of the Tiananmen square democracy demonstrations two years earlier. Then, talk of a divided party and civil

war was in the air.

Last year, Wang published "Sky Burial," a non-fiction that trenchantly criticised the government's and the exiled Dalai Lama's policies on Tibet.

Both works, published by a Toronto-based company, won wide followings in Taiwan, Hong Kong and other parts of the Chinese-speaking world. Pirated copies have surfaced inside China as well.

Wang began avidly researching Xinjiang last year. Postal workers installed a special large-sized letter box on the ground floor entrance of his apartment block to handle all the newspapers and publications on Xinjiang he subscribed to, his adoptive aunt Hao said.

The 45-year-old author set out for Xinjiang on Jan. 10 and was originally due back in Beijing around Feb. 3, she said. He called once on Feb. 16 to say he was fine.

Then, eight days later, he

phoned again and said he had "run into some trouble," Hao said. He had been in Hami, a famous oasis town, and was being "taken back," presumably to Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi, she said.

"We were really nervous. We didn't know if he had been beaten by ruffians or robbed," Hao said. "It'll only be at ease when he comes back and I see him standing before me."

Her husband was a colleague of Wang's father, one of China's pioneering automotive engineers. The couple helped raise Wang after his father was beaten to death by radicals during Mao Tse-tung's cultural revolution 30 years ago.

When police searched Wang's apartment last Wednesday, they brought a faxed copy of a handwritten letter from the author asking for Hao's cooperation. It also apologised for the trouble he was causing Hao's husband and Wang's own sickly mother.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hong Kong warns of risks of eating reef fish after poisoning outbreak

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong Monday warned about the risks of eating coral reef fish after 30 people fell ill in the latest outbreak of food poisoning in the territory. The department of health said it had received notifications of five cases of ciguatera poisoning affecting some 30 people over the past three days. The poison collects in the head, viscera and skin of large coral reef fish such as the coral grouper and flowery cod — both popular delicacies here. People affected by the ciguatera toxin may show symptoms such as numbness of the mouth and limbs, muscle weakness, vomiting, diarrhoea and feverishness. Most people will recover fully after treatment. The warning comes after a series of food poisoning scares in Hong Kong. Last September doctors warned of a connection between eating raw oysters and the rare flesh-eating bacteria — necrotising fasciitis. In June last year, more than 15 people were hospitalised following an outbreak of ciguatera poisoning, while pork offal also had to be taken off the menu after traces of a banned asthma drug were found. Warnings were also issued last year about beef following the discovery of a potentially lethal E-coli bacteria, and an outbreak of avian flu in December 1997 sparked a mass cull of the territory's chickens.

Gunmen attack bus in Georgia; one passenger killed

TBILISI (AP) — Four attackers opened fire with automatic rifles on a bus travelling along a country road in western Georgia, killing one passenger and injuring two, officials said Monday. As the shooting started, the driver of the bus told passengers to get down on the floor, while he sped up and drove to a police station in the nearby city of Khoni, said regional police chief Murman Lomtadze. Three passengers were injured during Sunday attack, and one of them died later in a Khoni hospital, Lomtadze said. Khoni is located some 260 kilometres west of the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. Several passenger buses have been attacked in recent years in western Georgia, which borders the restive breakaway region of Abkhazia.

'Congoese army retakes town from rebels'

KINSHASA (R) — The Democratic Republic of the Congo's armed forces have retaken the strategic Congo river town of Bolobo from former soldiers of late dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, state television reported, quoting the interior ministry. There was no independent confirmation of the report, which was broadcast late Sunday. Government sources said last week that several thousand rebels who had served in Mobutu's Special Presidential Division (DSP) had taken Bolobo, about 250 km northeast of the capital Kinshasa, on March 1. "The interior ministry announces that the Congoese armed forces have liberated Bolobo, which was occupied by former Special Presidential Division forces who were wreaking havoc there," the television said. "Life is back to normal... and people are going about their normal activities, essentially fishing," it added. The DSP was particularly feared by ordinary people in Zaïre, the name of the Democratic Republic of the Congo under Mobutu. A group calling itself the Union of Nationalist Republicans for the Liberation said in a statement released in the neighbouring Congo republic capital Brazzaville last week that its forces had taken Bolobo without any fighting. Rwandan and Ugandan-backed rebels rose against President Laurent Kabila on Aug. 2. Kabila deposed Mobutu in 1997. Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad have all sent troops to fight for Kabila. The rebels control most of the east. Various reports have spoken of fighting this month around the strategic eastern town of Kindu, which has an airport and is on a rail link to the south. Government officials say the town remains in rebel hands.

2 Pakistani activists killed in failed escape attempt

KARACHI (AP) — Two activists of a minority ethnic party were shot and killed Monday during a violent escape attempt, police said. Three other men escaped. All five men belonged to the Mumukshu Qami Movement (MQM), an ethnic group that represents Urdu-speaking Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan in 1947. Police officials said the five men were being transferred to a jail in central Liaquatabad when several gunmen intercepted the police vehicle and tried to free the prisoners. The two men who died, Mohammed Salim and Mohammed Farid, were charged with at least 20 murders, including last year's shooting death of police inspector Zafarullah Piracha, they said. A bitter feud between warring factions of the MQM have left more than 1,000 people dead in Karachi in the past year. Last October the government launched a massive crackdown in an attempt to quell the relentless violence in Pakistan's largest city, which is home to 14 million people. The MQM accuses the government of targeting its workers. Kunwar Khalid Younus, a spokesman for the MQM, blamed policemen for the deaths of Farid and Salim. "We don't think they died in a police encounter. We think they were shot in cold blood by police," he said. But police spokesman Khamar Ahmed said one of his officers was hit by a bullet during the escape attempt, but was uninjured because of the bullet proof vest he was wearing.

Barbie gets 160 diamonds for her 40th birthday

LONDON (AFP) — Barbie, the world's most celebrated doll, marks her 40th birthday this week with a unique diamond-encrusted dress. The £50,000 (\$80,000, 70,000 euro) gown with its 160 diamonds was created by Barbie's manufacturer Mattel together with diamond mining giant De Beers. It was launched and put on exhibit Monday at one of London's most famous jewellers. A separate exhibition of old and new Barbie dolls was also on display at the Harrods department store. Barbie is the world's best-selling toy, and in 1997 worldwide sales grew to more than \$1.9 billion. The pink plastic figure, with a huge range of outfits, is sold in more than 150 countries and is said to be the brand leader in every one.

Post mortem on movie legend Kubrick

LONDON (AFP) — A pathologist was carrying out the post mortem Monday on U.S. film director Stanley Kubrick, British police said, although there were no suspicious circumstances over his death at the weekend. Kubrick was found dead Sunday aged 70 at his home in Hertfordshire outside London, days after completing the shooting of his final movie "Eyes Wide Shut." Because Kubrick's death was classified as "sudden" and the doctor who certified him dead had not previously seen or treated him, an autopsy must be held, a police spokeswoman said. "The post mortem is taking place as a matter of routine to establish why Mr. Kubrick died, but at the moment we believe he died of natural causes and there were no suspicious circumstances," Kubrick's movie credits included "2001: A Space Odyssey" and "A Clockwork Orange." The results of the post mortem were expected later Monday. Relatives of the movie legend, who had led a reclusive life at his British home, have refused to release any details of the cause of his death.

S. Africa keeps Swiss journalist in jail

CAPE TOWN (R) — South African police detained a Swiss journalist for a third day Monday but authorities have not decided whether to prosecute him for alleged possession of secret documents, his lawyer said.

Jean-Philippe Ceppi, a Swiss television journalist, was arrested in his Cape Town hotel room Friday night allegedly for being in the possession of secret military papers.

Ceppi's lawyer Richard Rosenthal said the journalist had been arrested for charges under the 1982 protection of information act, passed by the former apartheid government.

"This whole case has strange resonances of the past," Rosenthal told Reuters outside the Cape Town court. Ceppi was due to appear in court Monday, but Caroline Dumay, a French journalist with Ceppi when he was arrested, said western Cape attorney General Frank Kahn was still deliberating whether to charge him.

Dumay told journalists outside the court the documents in question were already before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but declined to give further details. "They are not exactly secret," she said.

Bertrand Theubert, another Swiss journalist with Ceppi at the time of the arrest, said he

could not even read the documents.

"The documents were in Afrikaans. We didn't even know what was in them — some names appeared that we were interested in," Theubert said outside the court.

Roland Vioti, acting Swiss consul in Cape Town, said the journalists were in South Africa to probe links between the two countries during apartheid.

"They want to show Switzerland that all the pages of its history are not clean," he said, adding that his country was undergoing a period of intense soul-searching since revelations of collaboration with Nazi Germany over gold.

Ceppi has written extensively about alleged Swiss connections with Wouter Basson, the former head of the apartheid regime's chemical and biological warfare programme, who Vioti confirmed had visited Switzerland many times.

The truth commission last year held hearings into the chemical and biological programme of the former white minority rulers, including details of plans to develop anti-fertility drugs for black women and a range of elaborate poisons.

Basson is due to stand trial later this year on fraud and drug-related charges connected to his time as head of the weapons programme.

Dumpling song unlikely hit in success-hungry Japan

TOKYO (R) — Three small round rice dumplings on a wooden stick don't sound like the heroes of a hit song.

But a Japanese children's tune about the traditional snacks, called "dango," set to a simple tango beat, is in the middle of dancing its way across Japan, becoming the latest craze among children and adults alike.

Some 2.5 million CDs of the song, which first appeared on a television programme in January, sold out within days of going on sale last week. It is expected to top the hit charts when the newest rankings are published Tuesday.

Sales of dango — rice flour formed into balls, steamed and then roasted before being served with sweet beanpaste, sesame or soy-based sauces — are booming, with customers tapping their feet to the tune as they wait to be served at shops.

Even shops have benefited. Shares of Nippon Hoso, majority

owner of the music company that produced the CD, and Fuji television, a Nippon Hoso affiliate, soared by their daily limit of 500 yen (\$4) for several days in a row last week.

"We started hearing in February that the song was getting good reviews," said Ryoichi Takayanagi, a spokesman for Nippon Hoso radio. "But we really didn't expect things to go this far."

The song, "Three dango brothers," is about three dumplings on a stick, one of which is the best.

The responsible eldest is "always thinking of his younger brothers," the spoiled youngest is "always worrying about his older brothers," while the independent middle one "thinks he's the best."

They happily take part together in traditional seasonal events such as cherry-blossom parties and evenings of moon-viewing, but suddenly quarrel over who

looks best. Almost immediately they make up, though, and beg to be reborn in their next life "together on the same stick again."

In the end, instead of being eaten, they grow hard together on a plate after being left overnight in a cupboard.

The tune's popularity can be laid to the catchy tango beat, which sticks in one's mind much as the sweets stick to one's teeth, and the lyrics, easy for even small children to sing.

Observers also point to social changes.

"Japanese women now, on average, have 1.4 children each, and there are many only children," said Norio Kamijo, a director at Dentsu Institute for Human Studies.

"This song, with its three children, makes parents nostalgic for the days of larger families in the past."

Others say the boom is driven by the longing of children them-

selves to have more siblings, a desire strengthened by the different characters of the three dango and the love between them that remains unharmed even after they fight.

For merchandisers bauling Japan's worst economic recession in decades, the song could prove very sweet music indeed.

Spillover effects are predicted for makers of dango ingredients, while toy makers are hoping for hot sales of licensed goods.

Economist Akioyoshi Takumori at Sakura Securities said the song could be a harbinger of brighter days for the whole economy.

Noting that recent history has shown that children's songs tend to become huge hits when the economy is about to emerge from recession, Takumori added: "If the song cheers people up and boosts their propensity to consume by one per cent, that would have the same effect as six trillion yen (\$49.5 billion) of income tax cuts."

Kosovo rebels keep world guessing on deal

PRISTINA, Serbia (R) — The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), wary of signing itself into oblivion, must decide if an international peace plan on offer for the Serbian province is a reprieve or a trap.

And while the ethnic Albanian guerrilla force tries to make up its mind, Western diplomats are wringing their hands because a "No" would effectively kill months of painstaking negotiations backed by threats of NATO air strikes.

"We had what we thought was a solid plan that would have demilitarised Kosovo and given the ethnic Albanians autonomy with NATO ground forces to guarantee their safety," a Western diplomat who asked not to be named said Monday.

"We knew that the KLA was a wildcard, but it seemed to us we were making an offer they couldn't refuse. The big stick was NATO air power, aimed at the Serbs."

"But we have to get the KLA to say 'Yes' first and that's proving to be a long, frustrating process. Critics will say it was a mistake to devise a plan that depended on the KLA's acquiescence. I don't know what else we could have done."

Many diplomats had predicted the KLA would make a decision on the peace plan Sunday, but none was forthcoming. Senior guerrilla leaders were expected to meet Monday, but there was no guarantee they would decide anything.

The KLA has been fighting for independence, not autonomy.

Sources close to the guerrillas reported that by Sunday at least two of seven zone commanders opposed the deal.

As it stands, the peace plan would sound the death knell for the KLA, which is only a year old as a fighting force.

NATO would supervise its disarming and disbanding.

Some of the guerrillas would be eligible to join a newly constituted Kosovo police force in which ethnic Albanians — a 90 per cent

majority in the province — would predominate.

The United States government has expressed an interest in inviting some KLA leaders to Washington to discuss how their army can make the transition from a military to a political organisation without losing its clout as an agent for change.

Doubters within the KLA argue that autonomy within Serbia would sentence them to a twilight cohabitation with Serbs who have been their enemies and tormentors for most of this century.

And they point to uneven enforcement of the Dayton peace plan for Bosnia by NATO troops as proof that only the KLA and independence can guarantee the freedom of the 90 per cent ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo.

Seventeen days of negotiations in Rambouillet, France, last month produced an 83-page peace plan accepted by all members of the ethnic Albanian delegation except the KLA representatives.

The Serb side indicated it was willing to consider autonomy for Kosovo, but not the 28,000 NATO ground troops who would be deployed to ensure implementation.

The ethnic Albanians said they would deliver a final decision in two weeks — technically, by the end of Monday.

Both parties are under orders to attend a follow-on to the Rambouillet conference in France beginning on March 15 where implementation issues will be on the table.

NATO has warned that Yugoslav military targets may be attacked if Belgrade withholds approval for the plan. The ethnic Albanian side has been threatened with unspecified consequences if it rejects the deal.

Military analysts say the lightly armed, widely dispersed KLA units present an impossible target for NATO war planes, but that cutting off the flow of funds and arms to the guerrillas is within the international community's capabilities.



Japan's Justice Minister Shoburo Nakamura is surrounded by reporters as he leaves the official residence of Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in Tokyo after submitting his resignation (Reuters photo)

Little-known Japanese politician takes justice minister post

TOKYO (AFP) — A little-known Japanese politician Monday took over as justice minister after Shoburo Nakamura resigned for a blunder in allowing his movie hero Arnold Schwarzenegger into the country.

Takao Jinnouchi, a 65-year-old member of Japan's upper house of parliament, was confirmed in the post by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi before a ceremony involving Emperor Akihito at the Imperial Palace, an official said.

His predecessor Nakamura resigned over a scandal in which he was suspected of keeping Schwarzenegger's lost-passport form as a souvenir for several months.

That led the major opposition parties to boycott parliament since last Wednesday, demanding his

sacking. Jinnouchi is an engineering graduate from the elite Kyoto University who worked as a bureaucrat at the powerful construction ministry for 30 years before being elected to parliament in 1988.

"Prime Minister Obuchi chose him, considering his long experience and excellent personality," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroshi Nonaka at a news conference.

Japan's justice minister is in charge of administering the legal system and the prison system. The public prosecutor, however, is independent of the ministry.

Jinnouchi is well connected in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and belongs to the party's largest faction, led by Obuchi.

In his time at the con-

struction ministry he was heavily involved in working on rivers, earning the nickname "Water Jinnouchi."

Jinnouchi, who has published a history of his native Saga prefecture, is married with two children.

Notorious Khmer Rouge commander claims innocence

PHNOM PENH (R) — Notorious Khmer Rouge guerrilla chief Ta Mok has denied responsibility for Cambodia's "killing fields," pinning the blame for the slaughter on Pol Pot and other leaders, the government said Monday.

Military prosecutors continued their questioning of Ta Mok, who was captured Saturday, and legal officials said it might take another couple of days to prepare and file charges against him.

"Ta Mok told investigators he is innocent of genocide," Phnom Penh Deputy Governor Chea Sophara told Reuters.

"He said Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea were guilty and it was nothing to do with him," Chea Sophara said.

Supreme Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died last year.

Top political officials Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea surrendered in December and were welcomed back to society.

They have been allowed to live freely in a semi-autonomous former guerrilla zone in the west.

Ta Mok was arrested on northern Cambodia's border with Thailand and whisked down to Phnom Penh where he has been kept under heavy guard in a military detention facility.

"He told investigators he was a low-ranking official, he was innocent, it was

nothing to do with him. Then the interrogators and guards burst out laughing," Chea Sophara said, citing witnesses.

Cambodia has said it will put Ta Mok on trial itself instead of sending him before an international tribunal, ignoring the recommendation of a U.N. team of jurists who said 20-30 former Khmer Rouge members should be tried by an international tribunal on charges of crimes against humanity and genocide.

The United States Sunday welcomed Ta Mok's arrest and called for an international tribunal to be set up but prime minister Hun Sen has warned that a tribunal for all Khmer Rouge leaders could spark renewed war.

Military court director Ney Thol said authorities had not yet decided on specific charges or which court Ta Mok would be tried in but he said it was likely to be a military court.

"This is a big issue, we can't finish it in a day, we need two or three days more," Ney Thol told Reuters.

Under Cambodian law suspects must be brought before a judge for a preliminary hearing within 48 hours of arrest, by Monday afternoon, two days after Ta Mok was grabbed, that had not happened.

Ney Thol said the procedure might have to be

ignored due to the importance of the case.

"If we detain him for more than 48 hours it could be illegal but this case is very serious," he said.

Ta Mok was not handcuffed or chained up but was under around-the-clock guard, he said.

A senior adviser to Hun Sen said Ta Mok could be detained for up to six months without trial.

Military court prosecutor general Sao Sok was not available for comment.

A human rights worker said the authorities' failure to follow legal procedures did not bode well for a fair trial.

"They can request up to six months pre-trial detention but that doesn't obviate the need for him to appear before a judge within 48 hours," Demetza Stubbings of human rights group Amnesty International told Reuters.

"It's one example of why they can't have a fair trial here," The one-legged Ta Mok, known as "the butcher," earned his reputation for brutality during Khmer Rouge rule when as commander of the southwest zone his troops mounted bloody purges of suspected dissidents.

If he is prosecuted, Ta Mok will be the first Khmer Rouge member to appear in a court to answer for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people during their 1975-79 rule.

Perry arrives for consultations on N. Korea

SEOUL (AP) — William Perry, Washington's policy coordinator on North Korea, arrived Monday for talks with South Korean officials on strategy towards the Communist country.

Perry flew in from Taipei where he exchanged views on regional security with top Taiwanese officials. He earlier had visited Beijing.

Perry, a former U.S. secretary of defence, is set to give U.S. President Bill Clinton his policy recommendations on North Korea by the end of March.

Perry was scheduled to meet President Kim Dae-jung, Foreign and Trade Minister Hong Soon-Young and National Security Adviser Lim Dong-Won.

South Korean officials hope that Perry's report will support their "sunshine policy" of greater economic and diplomatic engagement with impoverished and isolated North Korea.

South Korea wants the United States and Japan to offer North Korea expanded economic and diplomatic benefits in exchange for abandonment of its missile

and nuclear programmes and moves towards establishing a permanent peace on the Korean peninsula.

So far, those issues have been dealt with individually, but South Korea thinks they should be lumped together in one negotiating package.

Perry's visit comes amid reports that U.S.-North Korea talks under way in New York were bogged down because of Pyongyang's refusal to allow free access to a suspected nuclear weapons site in the Communist country.

North Korea claims that the facility under construction is for civilian use, but U.S. officials suspect that it is nuclear-related.

North Korea is reportedly seeking large-scale financial aid in return for one or two U.S. visits to the site.

According to Seoul officials, the United States is pressing for unlimited access to the site in exchange for increased food aid to the hunger-stricken North through U.N. organisations.

From Seoul, Perry will travel to Japan Tuesday.

Sierra Leonean parents reunite with children abducted by rebels

FREETOWN (AFP) — Amid joy and relief, 31 children released by Sierra Leonean rebels at the weekend were reunited with their parents and guardians Monday at a sports stadium in Freetown.

Overwhelmed by emotion, mothers and fathers embraced their sons and daughters, who had been abducted by rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) after an invasion of the capital on Jan. 6.

The children, aged five to 18 years, were kidnapped mainly in eastern areas of the city.

After their release Saturday, the hungry and exhausted children were handed over to UNICEF, the U.N. children's agency, for counselling and trauma treatment.

UNICEF estimates that more than 2,000 children were kidnapped after the invasion and are still being held by rebel

forces. One woman, her eyes filled with tears said: "It's glory to God for me to see my only daughter once again."

"I had given up hope that she was still alive. When one considers the atrocities and anguish the rebels left behind during their retreat, I thought nothing could save my daughter," Salmatu Koroma told AFP.

A couple who came to collect their six-year-old children were short of words. They kept on stammering: "Today is a blessed day, for truly the Lord Reigneth."

A guardian of a 10-year-old boy was also grateful.

"I am so overwhelmed with joy to set eyes once again on him," the guardian said.

"His parents are in the United States and they are still unaware that the boy had been abducted. Now I can tell them

the story," he added.

Authorities and aid workers say that children abducted by the RUF have been used as soldiers, sex slaves, messengers and porters.

One girl, aged 15, recounted her experience. "It was a terrible ordeal, living in the bush and surviving on wild fruits and drinking polluted water," she said.

"It was a pathetic sight for the little kids. It's a miracle how they were able to cope. There are many other children in the same plight," she said.

"I am sorry for the many other children who were not freed. They saw us being separated from them but I am not sure they were aware that we were the lucky ones about to be freed," she added.

A 14-year-old told AFP how he lived in fear for two months. "We lived from day to day

thinking the next day would be our last, for you hardly could tell when the temper of the rebels would snap and you'd be shot," he said.

"At night you are not supposed to talk loudly, and sleep would just not come because of the situation you were in. All you could hear was the chattering of birds, the hissing of snakes and the cries of a lonely animal," he said.

Rebels who decided to release the 31 children escorted them through the bush, and then told them to continue on their own until they made contact with ECOMOG, the Nigerian-led intervention force battling rebels.

"We trekked several kilometres through a bushpath before meeting ECOMOG forces at the outskirts of Waterloo at Makomp," some 35 kilometres east of Freetown, one girl said.

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Set the example first

ISRAEL'S CABINET decision to establish a national security council for strategic planning clearly aims to target the proliferation of mass destruction weapons in the Middle East and perhaps beyond. What seems to concern Israel most is Iran's nuclear weapons capability after having successfully knocked out Iraq's nuclear weapons programme in its infancy in the early eighties. Israel would not feel assured of its safety until no state in the region possesses any kind of mass destruction weapons, even though Israel itself holds an array of nuclear, biological and chemical bombs.

What the newly-created council seeks is the organisation of a multi-purpose military plan to neutralise any threat to Israel from any state in the region by either developing effective anti-missile missiles carrying mass destruction bombs or striking with impunity at mass destruction weapons installations wherever they may be before they become operational.

Of course Israel would need not go through these painstaking military preparations if it could set an example for other countries in the area by ridding itself of its own nuclear stash. Since we all agree that the peace process between Israel and its neighbours is irreversible and the stage is set for the attainment of a comprehensive peace in the entire area encompassing also Syria and Lebanon, Israel's best insurance against threats from any mass destruction weapons that may come its way is to yield to international and regional consensus declaring the Middle East a region free of all types of mass destruction. Otherwise, sooner or later, one or two states in the region would naturally opt to emulate the Israeli military preparedness and acquire one form of mass destruction weapons or another. Once the genie is out of the bottle on a regional scale no amount of preparedness by Israel would guarantee it absolute security from nuclear or biological or chemical weapons.

The fact that Israeli scientists have been busy developing ethnic-oriented biological weapons would only reinforce the suspicion of all states in the area that Israel is bent on enjoying a monopoly over the possession of such dreadful weapons. Should this be the case, we all would have to conclude that Israel is determined to exercise a hegemony over all the countries in its vicinity, something that many countries would not tolerate for long and would be forced to react one way or another. That is why the simplest and surest way to offer Israel security from mass destruction weapons is for it to be part of a regional plan to rid the region of such weapons.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Tareq Masarweh said this year Jordan's meagre water resources will be even scarcer in a country whose civilisation was established on managing water without using modern pumping and drilling facilities. There are many alternatives to provide to the JD600-million project that will pump water from Disi to Amman, added Masarweh. The new government must set up a "water committee" instead of the drought committee and ask Jordanian intellectuals and experts to take part in such a body to manage water resources, said the writer. For example, on water management, Masarweh quoted a German newspaper as reporting that advanced water technology has managed to extract water from desert humidity. Jordan needs intellectuals, determination and loyalty and not directors of departments full of "secretaries and carpets," said Masarweh, who added that for a start, the country should maintain thousands of Roman wells.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket said plans to deal with economic problems are not comprehensive enough to include the countryside and remote areas. The Kingdom's countryside is still of limited resources, poor productivity and cannot keep up with Amman's economic development. However, said Saket, the countryside is a main resource of people working for both the public sector and the Armed Forces, thus, the majority of them have limited incomes, which does not meet cost of living. Despite laws that encourage investment in the countryside, all former experiences have proved that the development of remote areas require a "serious" programme to provide opportunities for local communities, noted the writer. It has also been proven that establishing councils and industrial zones is not enough, unless there is a sufficient and comprehensive scheme with specified allocations to fund these bodies, he said and added that people of the countryside should have the right to a share of the state's budget and the profits of public organisations. Countryside development schemes are a fundamental need that must be implemented in order to achieve justice, equality in all areas, Saket said.

Cyber-values and the new government

THE APPOINTMENT of the new Jordanian government headed by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh raises fascinating issues about modern Arab governance and factors like personality, policy, continuity, and institutional credibility.

Here is what I see as significant about the transition from the Fayed Tarawneh to the Rawabdeh governments:

1. King Abdullah's letter appointing the Rawabdeh government listed many important, priority national issues, including the economy, democratisation, corruption, women's legal equality, and others. This highlights the country's and the leadership's strong commitment to tackling issues of importance to every citizen, noting both our weaknesses and our aspirations. The list is also politically and intellectually provocative, because most of its issues were also presented as challenges to most other governments since 1989. We must explore why the many recent governments have cumulatively made only modest progress on these important issues.

2. While we wait to see which issues the government tackles as its top priorities, my impression is that Jordan today is operationally a single-issue country: the only thing that really matters now is the condition of the economy, and the need to spark faster economic growth so that poverty and unemployment can be reduced.

All the other main issues are stable (e.g. domestic politics, and relations with Israel, the United States, and Europe); are slowly improving (e.g. women's rights, relations with the Arabian Gulf states, responsible press freedom); or are on hold until regional developments allow for movement (e.g. relations with Palestine, Syria, and Iraq). The very able Abdul Karim Kabariti as chief of the Royal Court also provides the King and government with smooth intellectual and political firepower on these issues, allowing the Cabinet to focus on the only issue of immediate importance that it can hope to influence: the economy.

3. On the economy, this government wisely maintains continuity in both personnel and policy. Three key posts (the capable ministers of finance and tourism and the central bank governor) remain unchanged, and the new Industry and Trade Minister, Mohammad Asfour, brings added quality to the team. The new-former experienced planning minister, Rima Khalaf, provides vital ideological continuity, which is important these days for investors and donors.

4. The personality and style of the new prime minister are an intriguing political factor, for the first time in our modern history. Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh is widely seen as very smart, tough, bold, witty, self-confident, and

sharp-tongued — never hesitant to express his strong views, even at the expense of putting off others. It is noteworthy — I am not sure in which direction, but I'm sure that it is noteworthy — that Jordanians' most frequent comment about him is how well he performed in his famous Jazirah satellite channel television debate with opposition figure Leith Shbeilat on the Jordan-Israel peace accord (which the prime minister supported). He performed well, and impressed the citizenry as well as the television producers.

And so it came to pass — in the second decade of the 15th Islamic century, at the end of the second millennium of the Common Era, in this ancient land where both human politics and structured communications were born about six thousand years ago — that the Jordanian public started to know and to perceive its public officials in part on the basis of how well they performed on television. So, Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh is our first post-modern, cyber-time, digitised prime minister, for better or for worse. This might represent a dangerous national Jordanian plunge into the maelstrom of Barbara Walters culture and television political values; or, it could reflect Jordan's positive, swift leap into modernity, as we join the advanced, consumer-oriented, wealthy, and entertainment-based societies that dominate the world.

View from the Fourth Circle



Rami G. Khouri

Whatever the result, hold on, for the ride promises to be lots of fun.

5. We must grasp and analyse the phenomenon of frequent Jordanian government changes. The Rawabdeh government is the 84th since the founding of the Jordanian state some 78 years ago — giving our 20th century governments an average lifespan of 11 months. Such short-lived governments could result in negative consequences, such as lack of continuity in policies in individual ministries; an exaggerated reliance on the personal whims of successive new ministers; early burn-out of capable young ministers; and, a tendency by the citizenry to lose faith in the credibility of government agencies that often lack the continuity and accountability needed to tackle enduring national challenges.

This is even more urgent in today's context of privatisation and independent regulatory agencies in fields such as telecommunications, transport and others (note this week's dramatic confrontation between the telecommunications minister and the chairman of the Jordan Telecommunications Corporation — not accidentally, in the highly symbolic telecommunications sector that is the lifeblood of the new global culture of information and entertainment, rather than, say, on the issue of the taxation of radish farmers).

The traditionally strong role of government ministries is becoming imprecise in some cases. Domestic economic and political power continues to shift from the near-monopoly of the state towards power-sharing with the private sector, independent regulatory agencies, para-state organisations, non-governmental civil society institutions, and foreign donors. Even the Royal Palace itself has had to step in to provide some vital services once handled solely by the state bureaucracy, such as information, telecommunications, health, education, and others. It is worth conducting a serious study to find out the reasons for this incremental marginalization of the roles of some ministries, in particular if frequent government changes have any positive or negative impact in this area.



U.S. must not go bananas

Free trade has its limits

JUST ONE month ago at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the top American trade official could not have been more internationally minded. He pledged his government would resist domestic protectionism, eschew contentious unilateral trade measures, and play by global rules. Yet today the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meets in emergency talks in Geneva to hear European Union complaints against unilateral U.S. sanctions in the ever-worsening banana war.

For such an inoffensive fruit, the banana has produced some quite extraordinary interchanges. Sir Leon Brittan, the normally highly controlled European Commissioner, let his emotions rip last week over the punitive sanctions which America has announced on 15 categories of luxury European goods (including cashmere sweaters and Scottish shortcake). Sir Leon declared: 'It does leave a nasty taste that one of the major powers in the world, committed to setting up this organisation (WTO), as soon as there is political pressure domestically goes behind its back and flouts what it has said.'

In London, the U.S. ambassador who has only been summoned to the Foreign Office once in the last 10 years (when the U.S. gave Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams a visa in 1994), was called in twice last week. Tony talked to Bill on Thursday, Robin talked to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Saturday but still without any resolution. Today the European Union will seek to get the WTO to 'formally and legally' denounce the American measures.

Banana consumption in Britain has been growing faster than any other fruit. Over the last 15 years it has doubled. The banana now outsells apples as Britain's best-selling fruit. Traditionally, Europe received its

bananas from the colonies where it first helped promote the plantations. But the emergence of multinational companies has transformed this trade. Only nine per cent of EU bananas now come from the Caribbean compared to over 40 per cent from the three giant American corporations — Chiquita, Del Monte and Dole — with their large-scale operations in Latin America. The big three now account for two-thirds of all world production but remain upset by the preferential treatment which Europe still extends to Caribbean, African and Pacific producers.

The danger of the banana war spilling over into a general trade war is all too obvious. Both sides have talked up retaliatory moves.

Historically, trade wars have always been a combination of humbug, brinkmanship and bluff but no one would win from a return to crude protectionism. The U.S. has lodged a complaint against EU preferences still extended to old colonial producers. The WTO disputes panel is due to report on this complaint before the end of this month. This was no time to announce unilateral sanctions.

The U.S. has won three previous hearings on EU preferences, but Europe has amended its procedures and believes they now do conform with WTO regulations. Free trade has obvious benefits but the rules must take into account the needs of developing nations and the new world of multinational companies. Europe has a moral obligation, recognised by the Lome Agreement, to the colonies where it promoted plantations. Three windward islands — St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Dominica — depend on bananas for over half their export earnings.

'[Chiquita, Del Monte and Dole] now account for two-thirds of all world production... the latest U.S. complaint came within 24 hours of another big Chiquita donation to the Democratic Party'

Diversification is essential, but takes time. The latest U.S. complaint came within 24 hours of another big Chiquita donation to the Democratic Party. The International Institute for Environment and Development in a letter we published on Saturday put forward an important proposal: trade disputes brought by governments that have received financial support from likely beneficiaries should be null and void. Right on.

— Editorial, The Guardian

Letters to the editor
Jerusalem and ethnic cleansing

WITH GREAT historical and religious significance for both Arabs and Jews, Jerusalem has become the thorniest issue of all in the final negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. The question is, however, how much of the Arab geographic, demographic, political and social Jerusalem will remain, when the final status of the holy city is on the negotiation table. Considering the systematic policies all Israeli governments have pursued so far since the 1967 war, regardless of political orientation, in creating facts on the ground to strengthen their control of the city and legitimate their claim that Jerusalem is their "eternal-unified capital," Arab leaders and decision-makers should really be worried about the future of the city whose population of 150,000, practically live disconnected from the West Bank and Gaza Palestinians and is speedily declining in number.

The news (JT, March 3rd) that nearly 800 Palestinians were stripped of their Jerusalem residency last year shouldn't come as a surprise even to the biggest optimists for a positive outcome to the Jerusalem issue. Changing the ethnic face of the city has become a favourite Israeli policy with numerous recipes at hand. One of them is definitely reducing the Arab population and aggressively increasing the Israeli settlement presence in East Jerusalem by implementing approved plans for substantial settlement expenditure in and around Jerusalem, thus building a string of large Israeli settlements to be in full and strategic control over the city.

A variety of discriminatory legal devices have been adopted in the expropriation of Palestinian property, the revoking of their residency and prohibition of construction. On the other hand, the construction of thousands of new housing units is under way to keep up with the pace of "ethnic cleansing" and the so called "quiet expulsion" with the goal of reducing the Palestinian population of Jerusalem below 50,000. A goal is not so difficult to achieve with the help of sophisticated technology and magnetic surveillance cards through which Arab population movement can be monitored with great accuracy. The expulsion measures adopted against the Palestinian population living in Jerusalem are so wide in variety, yet the aim is one, and the common thing between them all, is that they are in gross unprecedented violation of international law, human and civil rights. For how much longer will the international community be going to confine itself to simple verbal objections to the present Israeli expansionism and passively watch the ongoing peaceful but forceful "ethnic cleansing"? Most probably until Israel has it all.

Rumiana M. Nuseibeh
Amman

Letter of condolence

I SEND you my deepest sympathy on the death of King Hussein. He was a very wise and compassionate man. He will be missed very much. I also send my support to King Abdullah who I'm sure will continue to lead Jordan on the path of peace and prosperity. I am an English woman who has lived in your wonderful country for 2 and half years and I share your grief. My sincerest condolences.

Zed Batchan
P.O. Box 2178
Aqaba

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well as special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

14 years after grisly murders questions remain

By Dan Whitcomb
Reuters

EVEN IN California, home of a nightmarish landscape of Manson family killers, night stalkers and freeway stranglers, the sadistic crimes of Leonard Lake and Charles Ng stand out for their cold, calculated cruelty.

But the two former U.S. Marines, whose unremarkable couch-potato looks hid twisted desires for violent sexual domination, degradation and murder, remain little more than shadow figures, their monstrous deeds almost unexplained 14 years after the first bodies of their victims were unearthed.

Ng's trial, which ended in February with his conviction for 11 murders, shed little light on the mid-1980s killing spree at Lake's mountain cabin in northern California's gold rush country that officials say left at least 19 people dead.

Lake, a 39-year-old survivalist who committed suicide in police custody, left behind the only clues in videotapes and diaries police found at the cabin. For 20 years he lusted to kidnap women and make them serve him sexually, believing he could break down their psyches until they became his willing slaves and eventually fell in love

with their captor.

Lake referred often to John Fowles' 1963 novel "The Collector," in which the protagonist kidnaps a pretty college student named Miranda and keeps her locked in his basement.

Lake, who built a cinder-block bunker on his property for this purpose, called his kidnapping schemes "Miranda Operations." Police say Lake was the mastermind of the plot and Ng his willing aide-de-camp, the man who lured co-workers at a moving company to Lake's cabin and who is seen in Lake's videotapes taunting and sexually abusing women.

Driven by sadism "what drove Ng and Lake was their sexual sadism. There is an overwhelming picture of sadism," said Patrick Callahan, a forensic psychologist who has followed the case for four years while writing a psychobiography of Lake.

"This developed from rape all the way to fulfilling Lake's fantasies through 'The Collector,' having a prisoner — or as Lake calls them, an 'off-the-shelf sex object.' His primary purpose was to rape and torture," Callahan said.

He said he believed Lake was driven to kill only when his victims did not follow his plan and become willing slaves.

Although evidence suggests that some of the male victims might also have been tortured or raped, most were abducted because they bore some resemblance to Lake, who needed their identification, money and belongings to survive on the lam.

"Lake's philosophy was he was going to have these victims and keep them. His fantasy was that after a while they would start liking him but he found this was a difficult business. He had to feed them and take care of them, take them in and out."

He probably kept them for a brief time and then when it became too burdensome, he killed them," Callahan said.

"His fantasy is that if he keeps this victim long enough and treats her well that she'll go along. But Lake was no ladies man, let's be honest. I don't think he had the wherewithal to do this."

Callahan said the roots of Lake's twisted psyche can be traced back, as with many killers, to a "very abusive environment" as a child. "This is a guy who as a kid set fires and killed animals," he said.

"This is a boy who was very damaged early on. He felt abandoned by his mother and he wanted to keep these women close to him so that they couldn't go away,

couldn't abandon him. At 19, he was abusing a 3-year-old girl. When she becomes 16, he brings her up to the cabin and rapes her again," Callahan said, adding that it was some time around the age of 18 that Lake read "The Collector" and began forming his plan.

Less is known about Ng, the son of a wealthy Hong Kong businessman who was once described by a sister as sullen and combative as a child and who came to the United States at age 18 after getting in trouble with the law at home.

At his trial, Ng testified that he was innocent of the murders but helped Lake make sadomasochistic videotapes and bury bodies out of respect for the older man, who had given him a place to live when he was released from jail.

But drawings Ng made in custody suggest he shared Lake's sexually sadistic fantasies, Callahan said. One depicts Ng frying a child in a wok, while another shows him sodomizing a woman while strangling her with her pantyhose.

"I have no doubt that this was a power team," Callahan said. "Ng himself spoke about how much he admired Lake. It was almost like a father-son relationship. Ng felt not only respect for Lake but also an obligation."

Ng is seen on one videotape

threatening Victim Brenda O'Connor, then slicing her shirt and bra off with a knife. He told jurors he never intended to carry through on his threats but simply wanted to project "solidarity" with Lake.

"That's like, when you kill someone, saying, 'I was really interested in them getting to heaven as fast as possible,'" Callahan said. "He's intellectualising very base animal behaviour. These people were chained and Ng wants to rationalise it as he was only that projecting 'solidarity,' he said."

"Murderers attempt to see very violent, degrading, base behaviour in a totally different light because often that's the only way they can live with themselves," Callahan said it was difficult to know if Ng would have been driven to murder had he not met Lake because, despite a criminal history involving mostly petty thefts, he seemed to lack the older man's aggression.

Little is known about Ng's childhood and there is no evidence of a criminal history or mental illness in his family.

But Callahan said that after Ng was arrested an aunt phoned him and said his parents preferred that he kill himself rather than let the authorities put him to death.

Shortly after, Ng tried to hang himself in his jail cell.

'For 20 years [Lake] lusted to kidnap women and make them serve him sexually, believing he could break down their psyches until they became his willing slaves and eventually fell in love with their captor'

Herpes killing zoo elephants

By Maggie Fox
Reuters

A MYSTERIOUS and fatal herpes virus is killing elephants at American zoos and could endanger all zoo elephants, researchers said last Thursday.

Two slightly different versions of the virus, a distant relative of the viruses that cause chickenpox and cold sores in humans, probably passed from African elephants to Asian elephants and vice-versa, the researchers said.

The virus kills young elephants, the researchers reported in the journal Science.

"This is very troubling because they are an endangered species," Gary Hayward, a virus expert at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore who worked on the study, said.

If the infection is found quickly, it can be treated with antiviral drugs such as famciclovir, the researchers said.

Zoos are working hard to preserve their elephant populations. Asian elephants, a separate species from African elephants, are especially rare. Zoos can no longer get new specimens from the wild and are forced to breed them — itself a difficult and lengthy task.

But of the 34 elephants born in U.S. and Canadian zoos between 1983 and 1996, nine have died from the virus, the researchers reported in the journal Science.

Unlike common herpes simplex viruses, which attack the skin and lie latent in nerve cells, the new elephant virus attacks endothelial cells — the cells that line blood vessels,

the heart and other organs. Some of the baby elephants died of heart attacks caused when their blood vessels collapsed.

The first elephant born at the national zoo in Washington D.C. was the first known victim of the virus. Her sudden death at the age of 16 months in 1995 baffled zookeepers.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins and the zoo started investigating and found evidence of virus. It was hard to tease out, but genetic tests eventually confirmed the elephant had been infected with a herpes virus.

"It's actually a very different type of virus, but not related to any other kind of herpes virus that we know about," Tissue samples from other animals that had died in the United States and Canada were also infected. Similar infections were found in elephants in Switzerland and Germany.

When an elephant was born at a circus in Missouri with symptoms of infection, vets gave him famciclovir, usually used to treat genital herpes and shingles in people. The calf recovered, as did another one in Florida.

The researchers travelled to South Africa and Zimbabwe found several wild elephants with the blisters associated with herpes, but they were all apparently healthy.

The researchers believe the African virus exists harmlessly in African elephants — somewhat akin to cold sores — but when passed to Asian elephants it can kill. They have no evidence of a similar natural virus in Asian elephants but believe there must be one, and it would kill African elephants.

Vegetarian Jesus ads anger critics

By Gail Appleson
Reuters

A PORTRAIT of Jesus with his head encircled by an orange slice rather than a halo might sound like modern art, but it is actually part of a billboard campaign aimed at stopping people from eating meat.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Norfolk, Virginia-based activist group known for dramatic and controversial protests, has adopted another attention-getting strategy with billboards proclaiming "Jesus was a vegetarian." The billboard campaign was launched several months ago and sites included Pope John Paul II's travel route in St. Louis in January. PETA press materials include a photo of the Pope passing beneath the billboard, which also features the phrase "show respect for God's creatures — follow him." Vegetarian campaign coordinator Bruce Friedrich said the programme will escalate ahead of Easter with new billboards going up this month in Amarillo, Texas — the heart of cattle country — and Lynchburg, Virginia, where the Rev. Jerry Falwell, the conservative Christian Evangelist, is based.

Falwell caused a furore when he wrote in his monthly magazine last month that British television import Tinky Winky is gay, but he later denied "outing" the purple Teletubby.

Since PETA focuses on the mistreatment of animals and not Teletubbies, it wants to capture the support of TV evangelists who reach a wide range of followers. So it has written to all the top evangelists — including Falwell — hoping they will help spread the word. Friedrich said Falwell and Oral Roberts were the only two who had not responded to the letters.

PETA's first billboard was erected near Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, late last year. "We hoped by putting billboards near them we will get people talking about the issue and it would generate a response," Friedrich said.

"Part of the purpose of the campaign is to provoke comment." If PETA hopes to raise eyebrows, Amarillo is another great place to do it. It is, after all, where Texas cattlemen filed an \$11 million lawsuit against talk-show host Oprah Winfrey and Howard Lyman of the Humane Society of the United States for allegedly defaming the beef business.

A federal court jury acquitted Winfrey and Lyman in February 1998 but the verdict is being appealed and another group representing cattlemen from Hawaii to New York has filed a similar suit against the two.

"We hope it (the billboard) will rival the Oprah trial for controversy and conversion," Friedrich said. PETA's internal media department is carrying out the billboard campaign without an ad agency and no figures were available on its costs.

PETA's campaign "to convert Christians to vegetarianism" actually started in 1997 when the group launched its "Jesus web site" at www.jesusveg.com, Friedrich said. He

said PETA hopes the billboards will get more people to visit the site.

The campaign also includes T-shirts with the Jesus/citrus fruit image selling for \$16.50, which he said is PETA's second best seller. The most popular T-shirt calls for a boycott of Procter & Gamble and shows a detergent box that looks like tide but instead has the word "died" and is surrounded by animals.

The campaign also includes "mascots," people dressed up like Jesus and a cow who attend religious conventions and who circulated in St. Louis during the Pope's visit. The Jesus mascot carries a sign reading "thou shalt not kill: go vegetarian" and the cow has a sign that says "meat is murder." "We hope that will get people talking and thinking about their own lives and complacency in animal suffering," Friedrich said.

PETA has never been shy about generating controversy. Just last month four models — two Spanish men and two Italian women — stripped in chilly temperatures beneath the statue of Eros in London's Piccadilly Circus as part of a PETA anti-fur protest. And six PETA activists were removed from the lobby of the U.S. Agriculture Department in Washington after two hours of screaming against government support of pork producers.

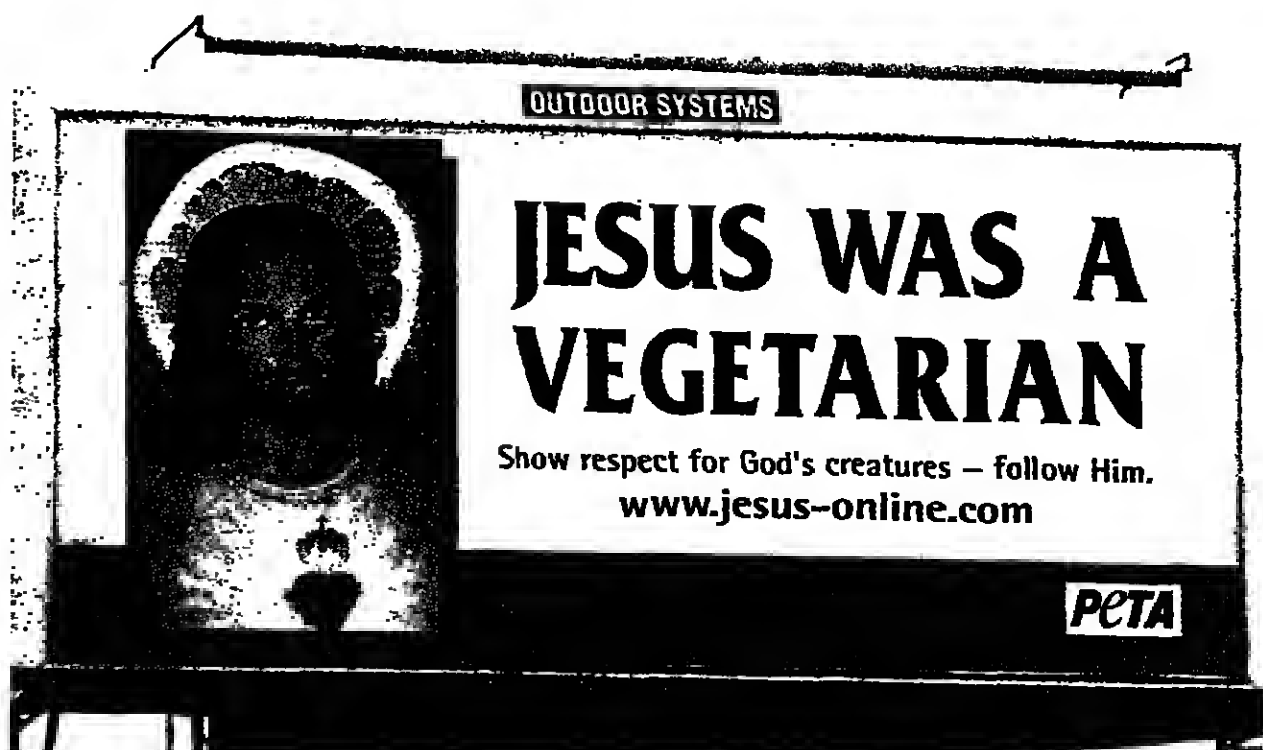
ment in Washington after two hours of screaming against government support of pork producers.

Also late last month, PETA ran a full page ad in the New York Times accusing Vice President Al Gore of pushing a government programme that it said will kill millions of animals in useless and painful experiments. The ad showed a gruesome picture of a rabbit stripped of some of its skin. Like its protests, PETA's billboards are hard to ignore.

"Most of the response has been positive, but some of it has not been so positive," Friedrich said.

A scathing editorial in the Toronto Sun on Feb. 28 blasted PETA for putting a Jesus billboard in Saskatoon, the heart of Canada's pork belt, which is hosting the Saskatchewan pork expo this week.

And after the billboard went up near Oral Roberts University, the Daily Oklahoman reported one reaction: "We are all free to express our opinion and we can make all kinds of assumptions about Jesus." Sister Sylvia Schmidt, executive director of the Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry, told the paper. "But dumping guilt on people about eating or not eating meat is not what Jesus is all about."



Billboard in St. Louis part of a campaign to stop people from eating meat by the activist group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Reuters photo)

Bottom water sets world guessing

By Mike Crawley

THE GOOD news is that contrary to theories making the rounds until recently, the western half of the Antarctic ice cap is not about to break off into the ocean, causing a catastrophic rise in sea level. At least, not for the next 100 years or so.

The bad news is that scientists are examining another little-known phenomenon that is bound to have some impact on the global climate.

It's a change in what's known as Antarctic Bottom Water. Currents of water develop under the southern polar ice shelves, the parts of the ice cap that float rather than sit atop land.

As these currents emerge, they melt some of the ice, then carry cool, oxygen-rich water into the deepest depths of our oceans. It keeps the temperature and oxygen level of the deep sea at a happy equilibrium, and its effect has been seen as far away as 50 degrees north latitude.

However, global warming is caus-

Scientists used to believe that part of the South Pole ice cap would soon collapse into the ocean and increase sea level so much that vast parts of the earth would flood. This scenario has now found disfavour, but that doesn't mean all is fine in the Antarctic.

ing changes in the Antarctic, which means changes in the current that flows under the ice shelves. And that in turn means some change to Antarctic Bottom Water's influence on the deep sea.

What that means is anybody's guess, says David Vaughan, a glaciologist with the British Antarctic Survey's ice and climate division. The British Antarctic Survey is one of the most — if not the most — prestigious scientific labs studying climate change in Antarctica.

"We don't understand it well," admits Vaughan. "We can't say what the real outcome would be, all we can say is change."

Vaughan says Antarctic Bottom Water is "part of the natural order." Scientists know that changes in ocean currents have impacts on the world environment: Witness the effects of El Nino, a warm Pacific current that is being blamed for the growing frequency of extreme weather events.

Although the Antarctic may seem too far away from civilisation to have

any impact on humans, its effects on the global climate — in particular the oceans and southern fisheries — are profoundly powerful. As Vaughan says, Antarctica sits right in the middle of the global climate engine.

Statistics from NASA show that 1998 was the warmest year on record, and it wasn't a freak occurrence as global temperatures have been rising steadily since the beginning of the century.

The blame falls on an increased amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is caused by the burning of fossil fuels. Scientists say that existing attempts to reduce consumption — such as the Kyoto Protocol that commits developed countries to a five per cent drop in their use of fossil fuels — don't go far enough to stop the warming trend.

The theory has been that global warming would cause melting in the Antarctic ice cap, which in turn would cause the sea level to rise.

One theory that was widely accepted in the scientific community predicted that the entire Western Antarc-

tic ice shelf would be so weakened by global warming that it would plunge into the sea in the next 100 years or so, causing a five-metre rise in sea level.

To put that in context, sea level has risen 10 to 20 centimetres in the past century. "A five-metre rise in sea level is Armageddon," says Vaughan.

"The scientific debate since then has been quite vigorous," he adds. "The impact of climate change in Antarctica is going to be a lot more complicated than simply the ice cap melting and raising sea levels."

Glaciers and ice shelves all over the world have retreated during the past 100 years. Yet two of the Antarctic's largest ice shelves, the Ross and the Ronne-Filchner, each about the size of Spain, have yet to retreat. "They're each a long way away from the temperature that would cause them to melt," adds Vaughan.

In fact, the Antarctic may actually help mitigate the predicted rise in sea level, as snow that falls over the continent can be absorbed into the ice cap.

There is little historical data to measure long-term temperature trends in the Antarctic. On the Antarctic Peninsula — the thousand-mile-long arm that juts out toward South America from the mostly circular Antarctic — temperature has been monitored since the 1940s at Britain's Faraday Research Station, now operated by Ukraine and called Vernadsky.

It has measured "a rise in the order of two and a half degrees centigrade in the past 50 years," says Vaughan. That's five times the global temperature increase of half a degree during the same time period.

Yet, adds Vaughan: "The rest of the records from the Antarctic don't show anything like a warming trend."

He says that discrepancy is a good example of how climate change works: It's a complicated phenomenon that manifests itself in multiple ways and only time will reveal what its ultimate effect will be.

Gambill beats Agassi, Hewitt to claim 1st career title

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Jan-Michael Gambill captured the first ATP Tour title of his career here Sunday, but he needed all of three sets to squeak past Australian teenager Lleyton Hewitt 7-6 (7/2), 4-6, 6-4.

"It feels great, but I had to work hard for it," Gambill said. "I didn't have any easy matches this week. Today we had a lot of long rallies, it was a war that lasted for two hours, 21 minutes." Hewitt rallied from 1-4 down in the opening set to in a match which began on time just after a desert downpour drenched court.

But Gambill managed to squeeze through a tiebreaker under threatening skies to take the first set after 48 minutes.

Hewitt levelled the match at a set each, only to find himself sitting in the locker room as the rain returned and forced a delay of 45 minutes.

When the weather cleared the 91st-

ranked Hewitt lost serve in the first game, but got the break back in the sixth as he continued to play catch-up tennis against the American.

Gambill said that the rain delay helped his cause.

"I wasn't attacking his game before, but when we came back I was able to break him twice in the third and I felt a lot better," he said.

A solid ninth game from the World No. 45 Gambill was enough to seal the Aussie's fate, although Hewitt made Gambill sweat by saving three match points.

"Lleyton's a great player. I was up 40-0 in the last game and he never gave up," Gambill said. "He doesn't give you an inch, he'll be here for a long time."

The defeat was the second in as many years for an Australian in the final here. In 1998, Andre Agassi beat Jason Stoltenberg.

Gambill will move up to a career-high ranking near 30 while Hewitt advances to somewhere in the 60s, his best so far of a short career.

"Even though he served a little better than me, I felt I was close to somehow perhaps winning the tournament," Hewitt said. "I take away a lot of confidence from this week."

"The biggest thing now will be to forget about the loss and concentrate on the upcoming Super Nine tournaments."

Hewitt already has one ATP Tour title to his credit — from Adelaide in 1998.

Gambill, 21, tasted success in the first final he's ever played. He reached the championship match with wins over both World No. 1 Pete Sampras and defending champion Andre Agassi.

United and Chelsea must replay for right to face Arsenal

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United and Chelsea will replay for the right to tackle holders Arsenal in the FA Cup semi-finals after their sixth round clash at Old Trafford ended 0-0 on Sunday.

Chelsea were much the happier with the result after surviving a second-half onslaught by United despite being a man short after Roberto Di Matteo was sent off in stoppage time at the end of the first half.

United, who went closest in the first half when Gary Neville headed against the post, were reduced to 10 men themselves late on when Paul Scholes was red-carded, also for two bookable offences.

The Premiership leaders must now travel to Stamford Bridge on Wednesday for a replay, with the winners meeting Arsenal, who beat Derby County 1-0 on Saturday, in a potentially epic last four clash.

In the day's other quarter-final, two goals by Georgian Temuri Ketsbaia helped last year's finalists Newcastle United to a 4-1 home win over Everton. Ruud Gullit's side will play the winners of the Barnsley-Tottenham quarter final which was snowed off on Saturday in the semis.

United manager Alex Ferguson left twin strikers Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole on the bench, there was no place for broken nose victim Ryan Giggs and Dutch defender Jaap Stam was suspended.

Chelsea were without Vialli, Dennis Wise, Celestine Babayaro and Frank Leboeuf, all banned, and a poor first-half ensued with little sign of a repeat of last year's 5-3 third round thriller at Stamford Bridge won by United.

United attacked from the outset and Beckham, Jesper Blomqvist and Roy Keane went close as the home side stretched Chelsea.

And United's day of frustration was rounded off when Scholes became the second player to be sent off after harshly receiving a second yellow for fouling Bjarni Goldback after 86 minutes.

"We had enough chances to bury them," admitted Ferguson, before venting his fury over the decision to send off Scholes.

At a soggy St James' Park Ketsbaia opened the scoring against the run of play when his low 21st-minute effort deflected off Italian Marco Materazzi and beat Everton keeper Thomas Myhre.

Newcastle, for whom Croatian international midfielder Silvio Maric was making his debut, lost the initiative after the break and David Unsworth walloped in a spectacular left-footed strike after 57 minutes to tie the score.

But Ruud Gullit's side regained the lead on the hour when Greek George Georgiadis diverted home the luckless Materazzi's scuffed clearance following a free-kick.

Ketsbaia made it 3-1 after 73 minutes with another low drive from 20 metres out and eight minutes later teed up Alan Shearer to drive in the fourth.



Shaquille O'Neal (R) of the Los Angeles Lakers is fouled on his shot by Todd Fuller of the Utah Jazz during NBA action in Salt Lake City, Utah (AFP photo)

New-look Lakers knock off Jazz

SALT LAKE CITY (R) — The Los Angeles Lakers shook up their team and now they are shaking up the NBA's balance of power.

In their biggest win of the season, the Lakers scored a 97-89 triumph on Sunday over the Utah Jazz, their long-time nemesis, for their seventh victory in a row — and sixth since Kurt Rambis was named coach and five-time champion Dennis Rodman came aboard as a rebounding and defensive forward.

"You have to love the mentality that we're developing on this ballclub," Rambis said. "Attack, aggressive, a defensive-minded team. Even on offence, we want to get the ball inside, we want to attack the glass on drives. That's the type of team we're trying to establish here." Kobe Bryant scored 24 points and Shaquille O'Neal had 23 and 16 rebounds. Both had baskets in an 8-1 spurt midway through the final period that gave the Lakers control.

Derek Fisher added a season-high 20 points and fellow reserve Elden Campbell scored 10 of his 16 points in the third quarter and was effective at times defending Utah superstar Karl Malone, who scored 34 points.

"The two guys who hurt U.S. today were Fisher and Campbell," said Jazz assistant Phil Johnson, who fell to 0-2 as he fills in for Jerry Sloan, still recovering from knee surgery.

The Lakers beat the Jazz for the first time since November 18, 1997, ending a seven-game skid that included a sweep in last year's Western Conference finals.

"While we've had a few wins against them, you can't come out and not have a great game and expect to beat them," said jazz guard John Stockton, who scored

16 points. "We think Utah is still the best team in the west and we know if we want to go to the big dance we have to go through these guys and it's not going to be easy," O'Neal said.

Los Angeles also handed the Jazz their first regular-season home loss since Feb. 24, 1998, a span of 19 games. Utah did lose three home playoff games last year.

In Portland, the Trail Blazers raced to a 111-71 victory over the star-studded Houston Rockets for their sixth straight triumph and a half-game lead over Utah for the best record in the NBA, 13-3, after the Jazz (13-4) lost to the Lakers.

Playing for the second straight night, Houston's frontcourt of Hakeem Olajuwon, Scottie Pippen and Charles Barkley — all among the NBA's 50 greatest players — were no match for the rested, deep and talented Blazers, who had all 12 players score at least five points.

In Indianapolis, Reggie Miller overcame a right ankle injury to score 12 of his 16 points on 3-pointers and Rik Smits added 14 as the Indiana Pacers snapped the Miami Heat's four-game winning streak with an 85-72 victory.

Miller appeared to twist his ankle early in the third quarter but missed only one minute. He returned and fought through a limp to hit two key 3-pointers, including a heave from the left corner as the shot clock expired.

The Pacers lead the Central Division and tied the Heat for the second-best record in the Eastern Conference at 12-5.

Orlando (14-4) leads the conference. In New York, Patrick Ewing scored 18 of his 30 points in the third quarter and the Knicks held off the

New Jersey Nets 97-86 for their eighth straight home win.

The perennial All-Star centre made 14-of-21 shots and had nine rebounds and four blocks.

Keith Van Horn had 22 points and a career-high 16 rebounds for the Nets, who have lost nine of their last 10 games.

In Philadelphia, third-string point guard Jeff McInnis, who had played six minutes all season, scored six of his career-high 12 points in overtime and held Allen Iverson, the NBA's leading scorer, without a point in the extra session as the Washington Wizards beat the 76ers 103-95.

In Seattle, Kevin Garnett scored 19 points and grabbed 14 rebounds and Sam Mitchell hit three free throws in the final 67 seconds, leading the Minnesota Timberwolves to an 88-77 victory over the SuperSonics.

Malik Sealy added 18 points as the Timberwolves won for the third time in four games and defeated Seattle for only their fifth win in 37 all-time meetings. In Sacramento, Chris Webber got his 17th double-double with 18 points and 13 rebounds and added a team-leading seven assists as the improved Kings (9-9) held off the Dallas Mavericks 94-89.

In Denver, Tim Duncan scored a season-high 34 points and grabbed 13 rebounds as the San Antonio Spurs extended their season-high winning streak to four games, 106-96 over the Nuggets.

In Toronto, Vince Carter scored 26 points and outplayed fellow rookie of the year candidate Paul Pierce as the Raptors defeated the Boston Celtics 105-92.

Williams stuns Davenport to reach Evert Cup 3rd round

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — U.S. teenager Serena Williams has made Sunday her favourite day of the week.

Exactly one week after winning her first WTA Tour singles title in Paris, Williams scored a 6-4, 6-2 second-round upset of second seed and World No. 2 Lindsay



U.S. tennis player Serena Williams (L) is congratulated by her father Richard after winning her match against Lindsay Davenport of the U.S. at the Evert Cup in Indian Wells, California 07 March. Williams won 6-4, 6-2 (AFP photo)

Davenport Sunday at the Cup. \$1.25 million Evert Two-time champion

and fifth seed Steffi Graf of Germany stormed into the third round with a 6-1, 6-2 rout of Czech Kvetoslava Hrdlickova.

Williams needed little more than an hour to post her second career victory over Davenport in three meetings.

She broke Davenport three times while never dropping her own serve. "It was a great win," said Williams, 17. "I made no mistakes."

Williams and older sister Venus made WTA Tour history last Sunday by becoming the first sisters to win singles titles on the same day. Serena won the Open Gaz de France and Venus claimed her second straight title in Oklahoma City.

Davenport, the 1997 champion and last year's runner-up, had won 27 of her last 29 matches in the United States, including a sweep of all three summer hardcourt tournaments last year in her native California.

The 22-year-old, who has been battling a persistent head cold for a month, suffered her third defeat in her last four matches.

The slump cost her the World No. 1 ranking to Martina Hingis on Feb. 8.

"I couldn't play my best tennis when I had to," Davenport said. "This hasn't been the ideal preparation. You get tough draws and you have to be ready."

Hingis, the top seed and defending champion, joined third-seeded American Monica Seles and eighth seed Nathalie Tauziat of France as second-round winners on Saturday.



German tennis player Steffi Graf returns a forehand against Kvetoslava Hrdlickova from the Czech Republic at the Evert Cup in Indian Wells, California. Graf won 6-1, 6-2 (AFP photo)

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Jordan Times, Tuesday, March 9, 1999

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LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Jordan wins 5 swimming medals

AMMAN — Jordan won 5 medals on the first day of the International Swimming Championship, currently under way in Morocco, Casablanca. Rania Ghosheh took the silver after she registered a time of 1:19.91 in the 100-metre backstroke; Ghosheh timed 36.98 seconds in the 50-metre backstroke to take bronze; Farah Younes got silver in the same event in under-18 category, registering 1:24.69. Razan Khouri and Zeid Otaibi got bronze. Khouri registered 3:15.20 minutes in the 200-metre breaststroke, while Otaibi recorded 31.34 seconds in the 50-metre backstroke. Swimmers from Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Oman and Algeria took part in the competition.

Athletics federation complains to ministry

AMMAN — The Jordan Athletics Federation (JAF) has decided to reverse the suspension of Shadi Ka'kour for one month and allow him to train with the national team. Ka'kour was suspended after he sidestepped regulations of the Kingdom's delegation to the Asian Games which were held in Bangkok last December. Experts say the Ministry of Sports and Youth is the only party that has the authority to take such a decision. The JAF also decided to pay JD200 to Tareq Najjar who will leave for Germany to take part in an Olympic training course. In its recent meeting, the JAF decided to lodge a complaint with the Ministry of Sports and Youth about the insufficient equipment and preventing athletes from training at the Amman International Stadium which is currently under maintenance.

Compiled by Ahmad Kharib

There's life after drugs for Breuer and Shishigina

MAEBASHI (AFP) — Grit Breuer and Olga Shishigina are proof that there is life in world class athletics after a drug ban.

But the governing body knows its drug problem is still not over and leading stars have also expressed unease.

Kazakhstan's Shishigina won the women's 60 metre hurdles and Breuer of Germany the women's 400m at the World Indoor Athletics Championships here at the weekend, having both returned from lengthy drug bans.

Breuer was suspended for three years for drugs along with Katrin Krabbe — both were products of the notorious East German sporting machine. She came back in 1995 and has since been twice European 400m champion, but is still only 27.

Shishigina won a silver medal at the 1995 indoor championships but later failed a test for Stanolozol — the steroid used by Ben Johnson — and was banned for four years.

That was cut to two years after a rule change and she has since won the Asian title and the Asian Games gold.

No other athletes have made such a successful comeback from such sanctions. But their experiences have affected the women differently. While Breuer insisted the drugs episode was now behind her, Shishigina, 30, shunned interviews at the Asian Games in Bangkok and at the weekend world championships failed to show up at the medalists' press conference.

"About the doping issue, I did nothing wrong," Breuer insisted at a press conference.

"I won at last year's European indoor championships. I've been back for many years."

Shishigina's only comment came through an official interview.

"Even at this late stage in my career I can now see that improvement is possible for me as an athlete. My result in this championship has released so much pressure from me."

"I have waited for this victory and now I have fulfilled at last some of my potential," she commented. Both say they have high hopes of success at the outdoor world championships in Seville, Spain in August.

The reminders of athletics drug battle were all around the Maebashi Green Dome. Alexander Bagach of the Ukraine won the men's shot put. He also won the indoor and outdoor world titles in 1997 but was disqualified each time over drugs.

Jason Livingston, Britain's "Baby Ben," was also in the 60m. Livingston was sent home from the 1992 Barcelona Olympics after a failing a random test a few weeks earlier. Since returning in 1996, he has never lived up to his promise as a junior.

Many athletes have expressed disquiet at the continued presence of drugs.

Romania's Gabriela Szabo, who won the women's 3,000m for the third time and also took the

1,500m, has insisted no "clean" athlete could beat her.

"My most dangerous opponents have always been athletes helped by doping who exhibit unpredictable behaviour during the race and produce surprise results," Szabo said. She said there was no excuse for failing a test for performance enhancing drugs.

"No one can give you an injection without you being aware of it. No one can give you a pill without you being aware of it," she said. "I am an honest competitor and believe in maximum punishment for athletes who fail doping tests."

According to International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) president Primo Nebiolo, the governing body will keep up the battle against drugs.

"We will continue in a two-fold approach to this problem with severe regulations and preventive education," said Nebiolo in the latest edition of the official IAAF magazine.

But he admitted: "Drug abuse is sadly a part of the new world in which youngsters grow up and we cannot pretend to change that reality. However we can combat with all our means the cultural ignorance that triggers the belief that pharmaceutical shortcuts are necessary."



In this 10 April 1998 file photo, New York Yankees great Joe DiMaggio waves to the crowd before the start of New York's first home game of the season between the Yankees and the Oakland Athletics at Yankee Stadium in New York. DiMaggio, 84, died early Monday at his home in Hollywood, Florida. He was a three-time American League Most Valuable Player and was a .325 lifetime hitter (AFP photo)

Baseball legend DiMaggio dead at 84

MIAMI (AFP) — Baseball legend Joe DiMaggio, former husband of Marilyn Monroe, died Monday at 84, his friend and lawyer said.

Attorney Morris Engelberg confirmed news reports that the baseball star had died at his home a little after midnight surrounded by his family and friends.

With him at his bedside were his brother Dominick, two grandchildren, Engelberg, and longtime friend Joe Nacchio.

In October, DiMaggio underwent lung cancer surgery and fought through complications for weeks after.

Although he was able to leave a hospital recently, DiMaggio reportedly never recovered from the surgery and related pneumonia and was apparently too weak to undergo chemotherapy.

DiMaggio was released last month after a 99-day hospital stay at Memorial Regional Hospital in Florida.

DiMaggio, known as the "Yankee Clipper," patrolled center field for the New York Yankees from the 1930s until the early 1950s, and established one of baseball's most revered records when he hit in 56 consecutive games in 1941.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMARA HIRSCH
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TALK IS NOT CHEAP

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ 8 6 3
♥ 9 3
♦ Q 8 2
♣ A K J 8 2

EAST
♠ A 9 7
♥ 6
♦ A 10 9 3
♣ 10 7 6 4 3

SOUTH
♠ K Q J 10 4
♥ A 8 4 2
♦ 2 7 5
♣ Q

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
2♥ Dbl 2♠ Pass
2♠ Pass 3♠ Pass

Opening lead: Nine of ♠

Be careful of anything you say at the bridge table. In the hands of a competent declarer, it will be duly noted and can come back to haunt you.

West's double of two hearts was fatuous. The opponents were certainly not going to play there and since it was likely that South was going to declare the hand, there would be no lead-directing advantage to the call.

The opening lead of the nine of clubs was taken in the closed hand with the queen, and the king of spades was led to East's ace. Back came a heart ace, warned by the double, declarer never considered running it to the queen. Instead, South rose with the ace and cashed the queen of trumps. Since there was no sure entry to dummy, declarer was faced with the possible loss of two diamond tricks and three hearts. Can you spot the way out of this dilemma?

Declarer was John Collings of London, a mercurial but brilliant player. He continued with a low trump, giving East a trick that defender never dreamed of winning. However, East did not relish the prospect of being on lead.

With nothing left but minor-suit cards, it made no difference whether East cashed the ace of diamonds and then threw in the towel, or returned a club. In the latter case declarer would discard three hearts and a diamond on the clubs, and in either case the ace of diamonds and two trump tricks were all declarer could lose.

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Hotel InterContinental Jordan opens the new main kitchen
HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL Jordan has opened the new main kitchen, as part of the total renovation programme taking place within the hotel. This kitchen is fully equipped with all the modern equipment to ensure 100 per cent food hygiene, and it will also enable the chefs to prepare the famous and delicious National & International dishes, as well as the well-known desserts. Meanwhile, Hotel InterContinental Jordan's environment committee organised the fourth clean up in the area around the hotel. Management & staff members participated in the clean up. A clean up spree will take place more frequently and environmental training classes will be held for the staff, as part of the hotel's commitment to keep this beautiful country clean.

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature Jordan's leading environmental organisation is seeking a Environmental Consulting Unit Coordinator
This person will develop RSCN's new consultancy unit which offers a range of environmental services to private and government sectors, of which the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a major component.

The successful candidate will have a degree in an environmental discipline, at least one year's experience in EIA and be fluent in spoken and written Arabic and English. Good administrative and communication skills and also important as is initiative and a willingness to work in the field.

Applicants should send a letter of application and a CV in English to the Head of Research and Survey Section, RSCN, Box 6354, Amman or by fax to 347411. The deadline for the applications is the 26th of March. If you do not receive a response by 7th of April, please assume your application has been unsuccessful.

Bayern coasting towards the crown

PARIS (AFP) — Bayer Leverkusen trimmed Bayern Munich's "Bundesliga" lead from 14 points to 12 with a 2-0 win over Werder Bremen Sunday but with Bayern still in awesome form the title race is all over but the shouting.

In Italy Lazio went from strength to strength with a 6-1 thrashing of Salernitana while Barcelona took a step towards a successful title defence in Spain, winning 4-1 against Salamanca.

Meanwhile, Mallorca, second at the start of the weekend, slipped up at Alaves.

German international striker Ulf Kirsten finally made the breakthrough for jittery Leverkusen with a 75th-minute strike before Stefan Beinlich made the scoreline look more flattering with a second in injury time.

But Bayern had kept up their unrelenting pace with a 2-0

win over Freiburg on Saturday with an own goal from Jörn Schinkendorf and a second from Iranian Ali Daei.

Defending champions Kaiserslautern are third after a 1-1 draw at Hertha Berlin.

Hansa Rostock sacked coach Ewald Lienen Saturday afternoon after they fell 4-1 at Duisburg the night before.

Lazio showed why their Serie A credentials on Sunday by crushing Salernitana 6-1.

The victory extended Lazio's run of 12 wins and two draws in their 14 games since November 22 and left them top with 51 points — four more than Giovanni Trapattoni's Fiorentina, who beat title rivals Parma 2-1 in Florence.

The two clubs, who went into their match joint second on 44 points, fought out a tense battle for the right to chase Lazio to the line.

Parma's defeat allowed AC Milan to leapfrog into third place with 46 points after Germany's Oliver Bierhoff headed their 42nd minute winner against Piacenza.

The bad news for Milan was that Brazilian striker Leonardo ended up in hospital for checks after suffering a head injury when he collided with Piacenza's veteran defender Pietro Vierchowod. Inter Milan predictably went down 1-0 at bogey team Bari.

Defending champions Juventus conceded a 64th-minute goal to Sampdoria's

Argentinian playmaker Ariel Ortega but prevailed thanks to goals from Nicola Amoroso and Filippo Inzaghi.

Spanish giants Barcelona stayed on course for the Spanish title on Sunday with a 4-1 thrashing of lowly Salamanca.

Mallorca, second at the start of play, were defeated by unfashionable Alaves but Celta Vigo and Valencia kept up the chase on the Catalan Giants.

Barca are now four points clear of Valencia, who took over the second spot from Mallorca.

Valencia beat Athletic

Bilbao, also 4-1. They netted four times in the second half after trailing for much of the game, with Argentinian Claudio Lopez, the league's second-leading scorer, adding another goal to his tally.

Celta Vigo romped to a 4-0 victory over Real Betis and never looked back after Bosnian international Vladimir Gudelj gave them the lead in the first minute.

Real Madrid's new Welsh coach John Toshack picked up his first win as his team squeezed ahead of Real Zaragoza 3-2 with a last-minute goal from Spanish international Raul.

In France Sochaux, Montpellier, Lens and Metz all booked spots in the last four of the League Cup.

Metz beat Toulouse 3-2 in a penalty shoot-out after a stormy 3-3 draw in which four players were dismissed, two from each side, and no less than 13 booked.

Outgoing French champions Lens kept in the hunt for some silverware when Pascal Nouma grabbed a late winner at Rennes.

On Saturday PSG's miserable season continued with a 2-0 home defeat by Montpellier with the goals scored by Marcel Mahouve and Franck Sylvestre.

Sochaux booked their passage on Friday night thanks to an own goal by Auxerre's defender Pedro Reyes.

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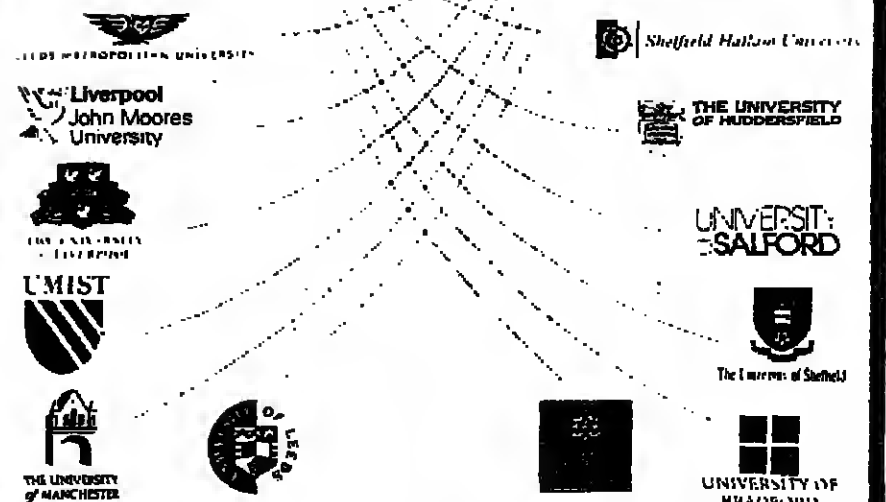
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Women go to polls in historic Qatar election

DOHA (R) — Qataris went to the polls on Monday in an historic nationwide election with women running as candidates and voting for the first time in a male-dominated region.

Thousands of Qataris queued for hours at polling stations to vote for representatives on a new 29-member central municipal council.

The new body is to give non-binding advice on food and public hygiene to the ministry of municipal affairs and agriculture, but a national elected parliament is planned and analysts say the council election is a watershed.

Women voters turned up in greater numbers than men at many constituencies in the capital Doha, one official said. "Our women are more educated than men, you know, and they are more eager to see the change," said a women candidate.

At the end of the nine hours of voting, between 90 and 95 per cent of voters had cast their ballots in Doha. In rural areas turnout at polls closed was estimated at 60 to 70 per cent, an official said.

Results are not expected until Tuesday.

Oil-rich Qatar is a political maverick in a conservative region and has an outspoken government. The Qatari emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifah Al Thani, has said that people's participation in the affairs of state can accelerate economic and social development in the region.

"We have begun an inexorable march on the road to democracy," said Minister of Finance, Economy and Trade Youssef Hussein Kamal after casting his vote at a school.

"March 8 will enter Qatar's modern history as the blessed start of an era of democracy and popular participation in the service of the homeland and its citizens," said Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khalifah Al Thani.

Around 248 candidates, including six women, were running for 29 seats from different constituencies, including the disputed northwestern town of Zubarah, held by Qatar but claimed by Bahrain, and the Hawar Islands, held by Manama but claimed by

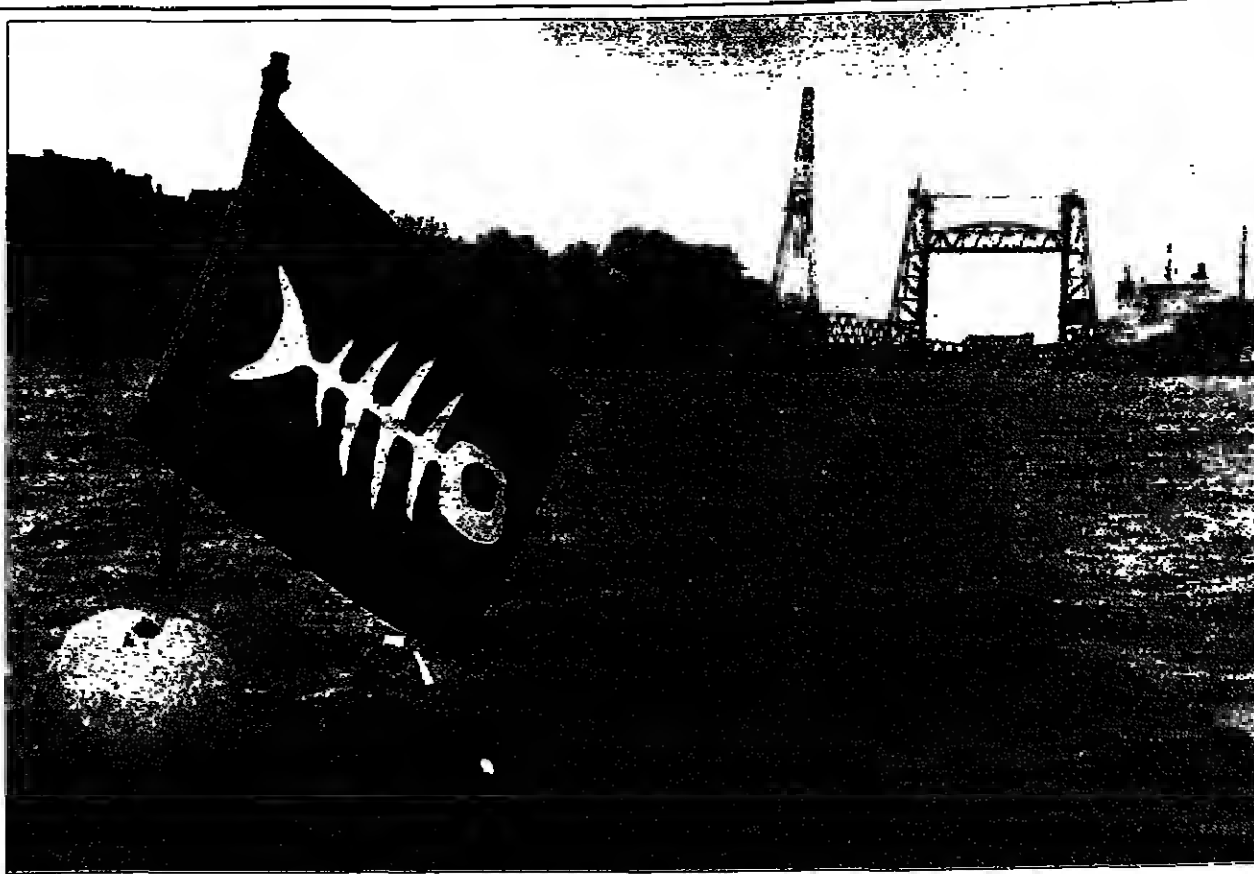
Doha. All Qatari citizens over 18 years of age, including women, out of a native population of 150,000 were eligible to vote, but officials said only 22,000 had registered. Police and defence personnel were barred from voting.

There were separate booths for men and women voters. Male candidates put up tents outside the polling stations and arranged snacks for their supporters. Women candidates did not.

"History is in the making," said engineer Khaled Mustafawi. "At the moment it is the first step in a 1,000-mile journey."

"Within a few years we hope to have elections for a parliament," said Ali Hassan Al Khalaf, director of economy at the finance ministry and a candidate from Al Hilal constituency.

The emir has set up a committee to draft a permanent constitution with the task of forming a national parliament and has promised parliamentary elections in the near future.



PROTEST AGAINST OVERFISHING: A Dutch Greenpeace activist floats in the water of the Maas River during a blockade Monday of the new supertrawler 'Afrika' (R) in the Rotterdam harbour. The activist hung a giant fishing net with a banner reading 'Full nets, empty seas' across the Erasmus bridge, blocking in the Afrika. Greenpeace protests against the overfishing of the waters around Mauritania and alleged violation by the Netherlands of EU rules on fishing capacity (Reuters photo)

Khatami becomes first Iranian leader to visit West since 1979

ROME (R) — President Mohammad Khatami on Tuesday begins his first visit to the West by an Iranian head of state since the 1979 Islamic revolution, and Italy is planning to roll out the red carpet for him.

Italy eased a diplomatic standoff between the European Union and Iran a year ago with a visit to Tehran by Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, followed in June by a trip by then-Prime Minister Romano Prodi. Other EU ministers followed.

Despite opposition to Khatami's visit among some Italian parliamentarians, mainly over the Islamic state's human rights record, Italian ministers believe his three-day stay will be pivotal in a new understanding between Iran and the West.

Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema said on Monday that Khatami had brought fresh hope of reform in Iran.

but the West still had to express criticism of some of Tehran's policies.

"We do not hide the reservations we have had with regard to Iran's human rights situation and international policy choices," D'Alema told reporters at his regular weekly briefing.

"Our judgment is that President Khatami has brought hope for moderation and reforms. And this hope for moderation and reforms has to be encouraged."

Khatami lands in Rome at around 0915 GMT and will meet President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro at the Quirinale Palace. He meets D'Alema on Wednesday before making a keynote speech at the European University in Florence.

Dini said Italy would underscore its insistence on nuclear non-proliferation — an issue of concern to the United States.

"We are against any proliferation and will say it would be most helpful if Iran follows the same course," Dini told Reuters in an interview last week.

Dini said Khatami had condemned terrorism — another worry hindering improvement in ties between Washington and Tehran — and that now was the time to show support for the reformist Shiite cleric, especially after local election victories showed popular backing for his policies.

"A new course has been set by President Khatami and he needs and deserves our encouragement," Dini said. "He should feel it is not our intention to isolate Iran or to keep him in a religious ghetto."

Khatami, a student of Western philosophy, is expected to use the visit to develop his idea of a "dialogue of civilisations," including a fresh discourse

between Islam and Christianity.

Attention shifts to the spiritual on Thursday when Khatami becomes the first president of the Islamic state to meet Pope John Paul, the leader of one billion Roman Catholics who has urged greater understanding between Christians and Muslims.

The visit also comes a few days after Italian energy group ENI and French oil giant Elf-Aquitaine signed a \$1 billion deal to develop Iran's offshore Doroud oilfield, expected to raise output of crude oil to 220,000 barrels a day.

Italy and France expect the United States to waive sanctions against the deal. ENI is also competing with several other French and British companies for more than 40 other oil and gas projects worth more than \$8 billion on offer from the National Iranian Oil Company.

Cohen holds talks on new Iraqi leadership, denies break-up plan

ABU DHABI (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen held talks with the Emirati president here Monday on what he termed the need for a new government in Baghdad but denied Washington was seeking the break-up of Iraq.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), meanwhile, said its opposition to U.S.-led air strikes on Iraq remained the same and that any change of Baghdad leadership was up to the Iraqi people.

Iraq and Iran, with which the UAE is in dispute over three Gulf islands, dominated Cohen's 90-minute meeting at Al Wahitan Palace with the president, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan. U.S. officials said.

"I pointed out that the press accounts that the United States is trying to organise or orchestrate a break-up of Iraq are completely false," Cohen told reporters after the talks.

"There have been a number of stories and rumours that have circulated locally that that is the objective and goal of the United States. There is no basis to that," he said.

"In fact, we have said time and time again that Iraq's integrity must be maintained," said Cohen, who has already

visited Oman, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain on a nine-nation Middle East tour.

"Our goal is to one day help bring about a change in regime so that the people of Iraq can in fact rejoin the international community as a full fledged member."

Cohen said Sheikh Zayed had raised no concerns about the U.S. air strikes against Iraq.

But a UAE official, asking not to be named, told AFP that the strikes were not raised in the meeting.

"The position of the UAE has not changed. It is opposed to the military strikes on Iraq and favours a diplomatic solution through the U.N. Security Council," he said.

The source said the UAE was also "against any change of Iraq regime that is imposed from outside," and that it supported Iraq's unity and territorial integrity.

A semi-official newspaper in the UAE, which backs a lifting of U.N. sanctions on Iraq, charged Sunday that Cohen was trying to drum up support for a plan to break up Iraq on his Middle East tour.

The paper urged the Arabs "not to allow the Americans' plans to transit through them and not to join in the crime of

destroying Iraq and breaking it up because they themselves will not escape the consequences."

On the bilateral front, Cohen expressed confidence in Abu Dhabi that a \$6 billion sale of F-16 fighters to the UAE remains on track.

"I think we are moving ahead with the proposal," he said after talks on the 80 fighter deal with the UAE military chief of staff, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahayan. "We hope to continue to make progress on it."

U.S. defence officials said discussions were continuing over the electronic warfare software for the aircraft. The UAE wants it to be able to identify other U.S.-made planes as potential foes, but the Pentagon has resisted.

Cohen said he has also offered on his tour to share U.S. early warning data on ballistic missile launches with the Gulf Arab monarchies in response to Iranian missile tests.

"We would do this with all the Gulf states," he said.

"To have a direct link between what our sensors are able to pick up and then to communicate that to the Gulf states to keep them apprised of ballistic missile testing."

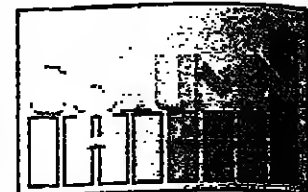
Arafat leaves Gaza for talks with Mubarak

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat left here on Monday for talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on strategies to deal with the end of the interim period of the peace process with Israel, a senior official said.

The official said the talks form part of a round of intensive discussions Arafat is due to hold with Arab leaders over the remaining period of less than two months before the five-year interim period of the Oslo peace process between Israel and the Palestinians ends on May 4.

Arafat and the Palestinian leadership have in the past said they will unilaterally declare an independent state on that date.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has threatened to annex parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip still under the control of the Israeli army should such an announcement be made.



Malaysian man in one-hour toilet ordeal

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — A Malaysian man got his hand stuck in a toilet bowl for more than one hour when he tried to retrieve his car keys, a report said Monday. The incident happened in a fast food outlet where the unidentified victim yelled for help after he failed to free his hand. The Sun newspaper said. Firemen summoned to the scene could not solve the problem, one reportedly saying: "We have never encountered a situation like this before." A contractor came to the rescue and broke through the toilet bowl. One hour and a leaking bowl later, the red-faced victim in his early 20s was freed, the daily added.

Dane caught in condom calamity

COPENHAGEN (AFP) — A 20-year-old Danish man spent two hours with his finger stuck inside a condom vending machine at a bar before finally giving up and taking the machine with him to a repair centre to be freed. Danish radio said Monday. The man, whose name was not disclosed, had tried to buy a condom from the machine at a bar in Thisted in northwestern Denmark late Saturday night, but the distributor suddenly clamped down on his finger before he could get his hand out. Two bar patrons tried to help free the man, but without success. The man was finally taken — machine and all — to a Thisted emergency repair centre where he was separated from the distributor.

Man shoots car after it quits on him

SPRING HILL (AP) — A U.S. man was so incensed when his car died on him that he pulled out a military assault rifle and shot it, police say. The sight of the man firing the AK-47 at the empty car startled motorists. "I understand he unloaded three 30-round clips into the vehicle," Sheriff Enoch George said. Boyd Kelly, 39, told police in the southeastern state of Tennessee that he was angry at the 1988 Oldsmobile for quitting on him Saturday night. Kelly was charged with a weapons violation and freed on \$2,500 bond.

Kenyan thief gets swift retribution

NAIROBI (R) — A Kenyan thief who stole the collection at a Sunday service in Nairobi's All Saints Cathedral was killed by a bus when he fled with his loot, the Kenya Times newspaper reported on Monday. The middle-aged man sat with worshippers through the service without arousing suspicions. "But when the time for offerings was reached... Satan, apparently took control and he was sighted by some horrified faithful, snatching some of the money into his pockets," the newspaper said. When confronted, he took to his heels, ran out onto a busy highway and straight into the path of a speeding bus, the paper said.

Illegal Viagra sold with 'money-back' guarantee

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — The anti-impotence pill Viagra is being smuggled into Malaysia and sold illegally at nightclubs, pharmacies and clinics. The Sun newspaper reported Monday. The diamond-shaped blue tablet is smuggled in from abroad and neighbouring Thailand by a syndicate and sold at between 80 ringgit (\$21) and 100 ringgit each, the daily cited sources as saying. "Callgirls sell them to clients with a money-back guarantee if it does not work," a source said. Another source, who has taken the pill, said he found it effective. "I cut one pill into four pieces and took a piece. After about 45 minutes of waiting, it kept me going for two hours," he added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hizbollah rules out pre-Israel polls truce

BEIRUT (AP) — Hizbollah will not accept any temporary truce in south Lebanon during the run-up to Israel's May 17 elections, the Shiite Muslim group's leader was quoted Monday as saying. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah also told the leftist Al Safir newspaper that Hizbollah would not go along with any amendments to a 1996 U.S.-brokered understanding barring Israel and Lebanese guerrillas from attacking civilian areas or launching attacks from them. Nasrallah said Israel has been pressing the United States and the European Union to help broker changes to the 1996 understanding, which followed the two-week Israeli "Grapes of Wrath" offensive that killed about 200 Lebanese civilians. Nasrallah said proposals include a ban on Hizbollah's use of roadside bombs like the one that killed four Israelis, including a brigadier general, on Feb. 28. He told the newspaper the guerrillas would accept no such restriction.

Yemen bans Saudi-owned daily

SANAA (R) — Yemen has indefinitely banned the Saudi-owned London-based Asharq Al Awsat newspaper from entering the country, a government official said on Monday. The official said the ministry of information issued the ban a few days ago over a story in February accusing Yemen of siding with Eritrea in its war with Ethiopia and providing military equipment to Hussein Aided of Somalia. "The article also attacked President Ali Abdullah Saleh," the official said.

U.S. to try to revive Syrian-Israeli talks

DAMASCUS (R) — U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk will visit Syria within the next few days as part of a regional tour to try to revive the deadlocked Syrian-Israeli peace talks, U.S. diplomats said on Monday. They said that Indyk would stress during talks with Israeli and Arab leaders Washington's keen interest to push forward the Middle East peace process. "Mr. Indyk will stress that President [Bill] Clinton wants to use the remaining time of his presidency... to focus his efforts on reviving peace talks on the Syrian and Lebanese peace tracks," one diplomat said. The diplomat did not give a specific time for Indyk's tour which would include visits to Israel, Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

Court rejects election bar on Kurd party

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's constitutional court said on Monday it had rejected a move to bar the main Kurdish party from April elections for alleged links to captured rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan. Chief Prosecutor Vural Savas had called for the People's Democracy Party (Hadeep) to be excluded from the April 18 polls since it already faces closure for allegedly acting as a recruitment agency for Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) guerrillas. The court judged that Savas's demand was "unfounded" but gave no details of its decision in its statement. Hadeep, which demands a peaceful end to the conflict, said the demand by the headline prosecutor was part of a wider crackdown on Kurdish dissent.

Israel expels policeman from zone

RASHAYA (AP) — Israel on Monday expelled a Lebanese police officer from Israel's self-declared security zone in south Lebanon, Lebanese security officials said. Israeli forces and the allied South Lebanon Army militia have in the past expelled from the zone residents deemed a security threat. Zeid Youssef Sriwi, 47, a Shiite Muslim police officer, was expelled from his village, Hasbaya, said the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity. Sriwi had been freed a week earlier from the Israeli-run Khaym prison, within the security zone, where he was held for 13 months. It was not known why he was imprisoned.

Arafat to mediate in Iraq

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will attempt to mediate between Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and a leader of one of two Kurdish groups which control northern Iraq, a Palestinian official said on Monday. The official said that Arafat would probably meet Massoud Barzani, the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), in the next two weeks in an international capital although the precise date and venue of the talks have yet to be decided. "The Palestinian [National] Authority is making these efforts... to try to maintain the unity of Iraq and its territorial integrity," the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP.

16 Algerian troops reported killed

ALGIERS (AP) — Sixteen soldiers were killed and 21 others wounded in a weekend ambush by scores of Islamist insurgents who tricked a military convoy to stop then opened fire, newspapers reported Monday. The attack at dawn Sunday on a highway near Bouina, about 120 kilometres east of Algiers, was the latest in a series targeting security forces instead of civilians. According to reports in three privately-owned dailies, two groups of insurgents, made up of some 60 people, trapped the military convoy in cross-fire as it made its way down a road.

Israeli court suspends legalisation of settler pirate radio

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

(AFP) — Israel's supreme court suspended on Monday a parliamentary decision to legalise pirate radio stations run by far-right Jewish settlers and an ultra-Orthodox political party.

A three-judge panel issued a restraining order halting the legalisation of the radio stations pending a ruling on appeals filed by the attorney general and opposition political parties against the Feb. 23 vote in parliament.

The ruling was a setback for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, which had hoped to woo right-wing voters in May elections with the legalisation of the settler radio, Arutz Sheva (Channel 7).

The parliamentary vote would also legalise a number of pirate stations operated by the ultra-Orthodox movement Shas, the second biggest party in Netanyahu's outgoing coalition government.

The court gave the operators of Arutz Sheva and the Shas radios two weeks to respond to the petitions challenging the radio's legalisation.

It also ordered the communications ministry not to issue frequencies to the radio stations prior to a final ruling on the legality of the Feb. 23 law.

The ruling, however, was unlikely to halt broadcasts by the stations, which have operated with relative impunity for years.

Attorney General Eliyahu Rubinstein strongly opposed the government's decision to authorise the radios, arguing that such a decision amounted to "retroactively legalising criminal activity."

Rubinstein had indicted several operators of Channel 7 in November, but the new law would rescue them from prosecution.

Arutz Sheva has been broadcasting a mix of music and extreme right-wing political opinion for years, both from the West Bank settlement of Beit El and from a ship anchored off Israel's Mediterranean coast.

Palestinians deny offering Jericho for Israeli rave

JERICHO (AFP) — Palestinians rushed to deny reports Monday that Jericho had agreed to host Israeli youths for a giant "rave party" after Israeli authorities refused to authorise the festival for fear it would involve illegal drug use.

"It's all lies, all lies. We don't want anything to do with this kind of thing from Israel or from anywhere else," the mayor of Jericho, Abdul Karim Sider, told AFP from his office.

"If they do come to us with a request it

will be turned down," he said when asked about a story in the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot that the Palestinian National Authority had given permission for a three-day "Peace Festival" of electronic "rave" music to be held in Jericho next month.

Israeli police denied permission for the organisers of the festival, an Israeli and his Tunis-based Palestinian partner, to hold the event in Israel on the grounds that it could involve drug use. Yediot

Achronot said.

"An Israeli journalist phoned me late last night and told me about this festival but it was the first I'd heard of it," Sider said.

The newspaper said the festival had received the backing of the Tel Aviv peace centre run by former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and had been approved by the Palestinian ministry of tourism.

In a statement Uri Saviv, the director of

the Shimon Peres Peace Centre, said his organisation had thought it was supporting a "folklore" festival.

"The organisers did not tell us that the festival was a rave party. We have therefore told them that they cannot use the name of the Shimon Peres Peace Centre to promote the event," the statement said.

And officials at the Palestinian ministry of tourism in Bethlehem said they were not aware of any request for a rave party in Jericho.

Cabinet to hold dialogue on press law

Arafat expected to arrive today

Lockerbie nearly settled — Qadhafi

Barak cleared of blame in accident